SOLOMONS PRESCRIPTION

For the Removal of the

PESTILENCE:

OR,

The Discovery of the *PLAGUE* of our Hearts, in order to the Healing of that in our Flesh.

By *M. M.*

LAMENT. 3. 39,40,41.

Wherefore doth a living man complain? A man for the punishment of his sins?

Let us search and try our wayes, and turn again to the Lord.

Let us lift up our heart, with our hands, unto God in the Heavens.

PSAL. 106. 29, 30.

Thus they provoked him to anger with their inventions, and the Plague brake in upon them.

Then stood up Phinehas, and executed Judgement, and so the Plague was stayed.

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The Preface to the Reader.

Reader,

I Had more Objections in my own thoughts to the sending forth this Paper; and can fore-think more faults like to be found with it when sent forth, then I shall now stand to tell thee of, or make any answer for. But because amongst all those Objections, I met not with this, That it was impossible it should do anie good, I thought the rest answerable; and because amongst all its faults, thou canst not (trulie) find this, That it was not intended for anie good, I perswade my self all the rest are pardonable. What the design of it is, if thou art in haste, the Title will tell thee; if thou art at leasure, and think'st it worth thy while, thou may'st find it in the Book it self; so either way I might be excused from saying ought of it here. But somewhat for thy satisfaction know, when I considered the sore Judgment wherewith we have been visited, which so evidentlie declares Wrath to be gone forth from the Lord against us, I thought it might be an Essay verie acceptable to God, and profitable to our selves, to do the best I could to make the voyce of the Rod Articulate; that in the print of its lashes, not onlie Gods Wrath, but the sin he scourgeth us for, and the duty he would drive us to, might be found in legible Characters, that even he that runs may read them. When I lookt on Affliction as a Medicine for a distempered Nation, I thought it was exceeding necessarie, in order to its kindlie working with us, to tell the nature, import and use of it; and to give directions how it ought to be received. And though I acknowledge my self the meanest of Ten thousand for so great a Work, yet when I saw or heard of nothing so particular and distinct, as I thought the matter required, humblie depending upon, and imploring Divine assistance, I made this attempt; wherein, whilst I have guided my self by the Physitians own Rules, and an impartial consideration of the nature of the Patient, I hope I have made no material (I am sure no wilful) mistakes. This then was my great desire and hope, to be by this undertaking, a worker together with Gods Providence for some good to the Nation. And surely no man hath cause to be angry with this intention, or with any thing that flows sincerelie from it. Had anie man though the meanest among the People, in the time when Nineveh was threatned with destruction, given in a Catalogue of those sins they were guiltie of, the removal of which could onlie prevent their Ruine; I am perswaded his endeavours would have

been grateful to the Prince, his Nobles, and the People, though he had spoke to them all with more plainness and boldness, than I have done. And I dare confidentlie expect the same, if our Fasting and Prayers be not onlie for fashion-sake, but in as good earnest as theirs.

Two great miscarriages moreover I was prone to fear the most would be guiltie of, which I have especiallie consulted against. The first, of being swallowed up so much with a sense of their Suffering, as to be indisposed for all profitable Reflections; and therefore fain would I turn mens eyes and thoughts from off this, to the sin that brought it; and have them onlie to consider the former, so much as to inform themselves more clearlie of the evil of the latter. Oh what Out-cryes we may hear up and down, what doleful times these are! So manie Thousands dead this Week, so manie another! The Plague got to this Town, and then to that! All Trading, as well as Persons, dead and gone! But were People formerly thus affected, whilst we were bringing this upon our selves? Did they cry out then, Oh how manie Thousand Oaths are sworn in a Week? And how manie Lyes told? How manie Thousands Drunk, and how manie commit Lewdness? Had we had Weeklie Bills of such Sins brought in, they would far have exceeded the largest Sums that ever yet the Mortalitie made. But alas! these with the most were light matters. Not half so manie groans and tears for these, nor anie such complaints of them; nor did the consideration of them make anie sensible alteration amongst us. Now this I would fain obtain, to have those dayes thought as much worse than these; and those actions as much worse than these sufferings, as the Disease is worse than Physick; and a Childs disobedience to his Parents, worse than his being Whip't: And he that should weep out of pitie to the Child, when he sees it lash't; and yet could be content to hear him revile and abuse his father, I should think to be a person of more Fondness, than Discretion; and for him to be more concerned for the Childs Smart, than the Parents Honor, argues him to have no true love for either.

And here by the way let me give a Caution, viz. That no man bewray so much follie as to argue, That because in mercie God may abate and remove his heavy Judgments, before manie, or perhaps any of these sins I have mentioned are put away from amongst us; and because we may have our former health and plentie restor'd, whilst there is no such Reformation of disorders as I have exhorted to, that therefore our Sufferings were not intended to chastise us for those sins, nor to bring us to this Reformation. If thou be an Atheist or, Infidel that makest this Argument, who believest not there is a God, or that he concerns not himself with our Affairs, but that all things come by Nature or Chance, or I know not what, I shall then leave thee to receive satisfaction (if nothing sooner will give it) there, where all such as thou by

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the feeling of Divine Vengeance, are at once convinc't what the sin is which hath deserved it, and that there is a God who inflicts it; but if thou be a Christian, then I would wish thee well to examine the nature of the thing, (that I mean, which thou thinkest God hath not punish't us for, because its yet continued) and upon the issue of that examination, pass thy judgment. It's much to be feared thou wilt see Drunkards, and hear Swearers, after the Plague may be ceas't; and wilt thou think therefore that these, and the like Wickednesses, did not provoke God to afflict us? But rather stay, if thou art in doubt, till the great reckoning day, till thou hast heard all mens Accounts cast up, and those Actions which are then approved confidentlie pronounce no sins; but not all those that survive the heaviest Judgments here on earth, which may be sent to punish and reform those that were guiltie of them; since hardned sinners may frustrate some ends of an Affliction, and all are not followed here, as Pharaoh *was. No, I say, do not justifie all such Actions, though thou shouldst hear them openlie defended, and applauded, and those men punish't that dare to oppose and contradict them, and that opposition made the onlie sin. This lower World is full of such mad mistakes and confusions, but all will shortlie be set strait.*

The other miscarriages that I feared men would be apt to run into, and which I have laboured to provide against, was, That though they might be convinc't that sin in the general, was the cause of all our miseries, yet hardly that it was their sin, or their friends, but some bodies else that they don't love; and so shift it off to this or that Party, whom they would have punish't, had they been in Gods stead. Such a strong self-love there is in everie man, that his fancie shapes God verie much in a likeness to himself. Even the vilest sinners, *Psal.* 50. 21. thought God such an one as themselves. *And consequentlie they account themselves, and all their Concernments dear to God, and so would interpret all his Providences in favour of them, to right their quarrel, and to avenge them of their enemies; for thus would they prescribe God, might they be call'd to his counsel. All would fain carrie it, that God is of their Partie, and against those whom they are against; everie man will be more inclined to accuse others, than himself: Nay, and hence it oft falls out, that they who have espoused anie sin, will be so far alone from thinking ill of it, that they'l rather accuse the contrarie vertue; and so godliness it self may sometimes bear the blame, or however the most godlie and unblameable men. The Pillars of a Land sometimes are accounted the Pests of it, on which whilst some men blind with rage, lay their hands to pluck them down, they are about to do themselves, and the people with whom they are, the same courtesie that* Sampson *did to the Philistine Lords. They who were the Salt to savour a corrupt World, were accounted the filth and off-scouring of all*

things.

things. Ahab *will sooner count* Elijah *than himself, a troubler of* Israel. *And when anie mischief befalls the Empire, then the poor Christians must be thrown to the Lyons. Thus I fear amongst us, manie bitter and undeserved censures will be past by one against another; which great sin have done my best to consult against, whil'st I have chiefly laboured to bring everie man to a reflection upon himself; whil'st I have studied faithfullie to deal, both to this man and that, his share in procuring our miseries; and whil'st I have made the Divisions and Parties that are amongst us which occasion this Censoriousnes, one great cause of our Sufferings. However one or other may interpret what I have done, I am prettie indifferent; only I hope I have said nothing, which need make anie man presentlie fall a confuting me, which, I le promise you, it's an hard thing in these dayes to escape; say what you will, 'tis against Sin onlie I have a quarrel: If any guiltie person (as the Pharisees when Christ preach't) shall think I mean him; let him once again know, That it is not against Small or Great, but the Sins of All, that I am entered into the Lists; and I hope they'l rather see to forsake, than vindicate them. But if otherwise, if leave may be granted, I dare undertake to evidence, That Sin is that which brings Suffering, and that those things I have mentioned as the sins of our Nation, are indeed such. Yea, and if it be not thought Immodestie to forestall the Readers judgment, I dare add, That I have spoken verie great Truth and Reason in the matters most liable to Exception, notwithstanding all the weaknesses and disadvantages in the representing, which I readilie acknowledge to be manie and great But I have alreadie exceeded the due bounds of a Preface, wherefore to conclude, Let all censure as they shall find meet; only let me make a solemn Profession (which is the more credible from one, who hath no great reason to expect to out-live the General Desolation) that, so far as I know my own heart, I have spoke nothing with a design to exasperate any, or to humor and gratifie one Faction, by disgracing or inveighing against another; but it hath been my care to speak the very truth, according to the infallible Word of God, and the clearest apprehensions of my own Soul; with an unfeigned desire to discover what indeed those sins are, which we especiallie smart for, that the inconsiderate and ignorant may be informed, the guiltie humbled, wickedness rooted out, God appeased, and all our mercies, both Spiritual and temporal, restored and continued; and these designs shall be followed with my prayers: (and I hope with thine too that read'st me) but how far the success may answer either, I must leave to the Readers improvement of, and Gods blessing upon my) well-intended, though weak endeavours.*

Thine in the Service of the Gospel,
M. M.

1 KINGS 8. 37 38, 39.

If there be in the Land a Famine, if there be Pestilence, Blasting, Mildew, Locust, or if there be Caterpillar: or if their Enemy besiege them in the Land of their Cities, whatsoever Plague, whatsoever Sickness there be:

What Prayer and Supplication soever be made by any man, or by all thy people Israel, which shall know every man the Plague of his own heart, and spread forth his hands towards this House:

Then hear thou in Heaven thy dwelling place, and forgive, and do and give to every man according to his ways, whose heart thou knowest, (for thou, even thou only knowest the hearts of the children of men.)

THE good and gracious God, the Ruler and Governour of the World, and the disposer of all events, doth nothing rashly or in vain, and therefore hath made it the duty of the sons of men, wisely to weigh and consider of his Providences, and to learn Instructions thence, as well as from the Revelations of his mind in his written word, *Micah* 6. 9. We are bid to hear the Rod. And though in the bounteous dispensations of his favours, we can assign no higher cause than his own meer Grace and good will, which is accomplisht in the doing good to his Creatures; yet in the inflicting of Judgment which is his strange Work, we may be sure to find something out of himself moving him to it. It cannot be well conceived how man should ever be the subject of pain or sorrow, did not sin render him passible, and open a way for the Sword to enter his Bowels, and give it that edge and force which causeth it to pierce the deeper, and to wound more sensibly. Now as a distemper which ariseth from a Surfeit, is to be look't at only as an effect of Intemperance, and is not to be quarel'd at, but the cause of it to be blam'd; and as the Chyrurgions searching into the festered place, is not a wound, but a discovery of the depth of the sore, in order to its cure; so are the Judgments which God sends on a people, only to be regarded as the Symptomes of, and means to cure that disorder and distemperedness within ourselves, which doth as it were naturally produce such sufferings. It is not the breaking forth of some inward distemper, which is our sickness it self; but 'tis rather

rather the effect of it. The ſpots diſcernable upon the infected, are not the *Plague*, but the Tokens. Thus are we to account the moſt grievous things that light upon us, but as the manifeſtations and fruits of ſomething worſe within us. Now look when men by outward ſigns find out thoſe ill humors that lodge within them, they labour not ſo much to repreſs the out-ſide ſore, as to correct and remove the inward cauſe. He that when the Pox comes out upon a child, would drive them in, ſhall but make ſure and haſten his death; but rather will the wiſe Phyſician preſcribe means for their kindly coming forth and ripening, that by them the corrupt humors may be vented and vaniſh. He that is troubled with heats and fluſhings, ariſing from his Liver, would but play the fool to lay plaiſters to himſelf, but will rather take Phyſick that may inwardly purge him. Even thus alſo ſuffering having its birth and nouriſhment from ſin, the way for the redreſs of that, is the removal of this. And by no other means can a kindly cure be effected. Indeed ſometimes an affliction may be taken off in greater wrath than it was laid on, when people ſo revolt, that God will ſtrike them no more, but becauſe they are joined to their Idols, will let them alone; but this is but the making way for ſorer judgments to follow. And thus will it be whereſoever we are taken from under the Rod, before we are brought under the yoke. If outward ſufferings turn to hardneſs of heart, deſperate is the caſe of ſuch a people or perſon, however they may applaud themſelves in their deliverance; this is but like a venom which may ſeem to leave a finger or hand, but ſtrikes up to the heart; this is but a skinning over the ſore which will wrankle beyond the poſſibility of a cure: It is but a kind of lightning before death, the ſureſt fore-runner & ſaddeſt preſage, that all our happineſs is giving up the ghoſt, and departing from us. Now we muſt needs acknowledge it infinite mercy and goodneſs in our God, when we have reduc't our ſelves to ſuch a dangerous eſtate by ſin, anyway to diſcover it to us, though by ſharp and ſmarting means, ſo that theſe prevent our final ruine. Oh that I could inculcate this into my own, and the Readers ſoul, that before we felt any pain, we lodg'd within us a greater evil, and that what we now feel, proceeds from the hand of love, if we are wiſe to improve it. Poor man, thou crieſt out of poverty, loſs of Relations, ſickneſs and pain, but didſt thou not know it? Thou carriedſt theſe, yea, and worſe than all theſe about thee before, when yet thou couldſt go up and down quietly enough, and never complain. Couldſt thou not ſwear, be drunk, commit lewdneſs, over-reach, defraud and oppreſs thy brother, profane the Lords day, neglect the Worſhip of God both in publick and private, make a jeſt of Scripture, and mock at holineſs, and ſcorn & deride, hate and perſecute the moſt ſerious Chriſtians? Theſe, theſe, oh ſenſleſs

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sinner, were thy sickness and misery; these conceived and bore about in their bowels, all that sorrow which since they have brought forth. Sin goes big with all the most dreadful Evils in the world; even Hell it self is its natural off-spring, but alas thou felt no hurt, no smart in all this. Thou couldst grieve the Spirit of God, and trample under foot thy Redeemers Blood, and run fresh Spears into his side, and nails into his hands and feet, & yet never once in any sober sadness reflect upon thy self, and say, What have I done? Thy sin was thy pleasure, thy sport, thy trade, so sweet, so profitable, that thou thoughtest it as dear to thee, as thy life it self, and couldst never believe thou wast doing thy self so much mischief, while thou wast pleasing thy flesh, or filling thy purse. How hard a task had he undertook, that would have gone about then to have convinc't thee that thy most delightful gainful sins, were indeed thy wounds, thy losses, and would be thy undoing? And yet thus it was. He that is swallowing down poison because its sweet, or wraps up in gilded pills, is then poisoning himself even whilst the sweetness is in his mouth, and his palat is pleased with the relish, though perhaps he may then laugh at him, that cries out it is poison, and bids him therefore as he loves his life, spit it out, what, shall you perswade him that can be hurtful, whose taste is so pleasant? But even he himself when he feels it burn his heart, and gripe his bowels, & torrure his inward parts, wil then cry out he is poisoned, and roar out in the anguish and bitter torment which he feels; but all this his pain, is but the working of that poison which then became mortal, whilst it went down so pleasantly. You may hear people when in sufferings, make sad complaints and lamentations, that would even melt ones heart to hear them: Then they can cry out, oh my Wife, or Husband, or Child is dead! What shall I do? How can I bear it? Oh what course shall I take to get bread for my self and familie? crie the poor, what must we starve for want of relief? Oh how doleful is our case! And they that are under sickness, and struck with the visible hand of God, how do their hearts sink within them like a stone? How pale and ghastlie do their looks of a sudden become? Now they are even at their wits end, oh any thing, any thing for help? What piteous moans now they can make! oh their head, their heart, their back! Now with what astonishments and horrors, do they every moment expect to breath out their last? with what amazing fears, what dark and dismal apprehensions of the state they are entering upon, are they now seiz'd? what passionate out-cries may you hear from them? what must they die? Is there no remedy? no hope? Must they then leave the world they have lov'd so much, and liv'd in so long? And bid farewel to their friends and companions, their houses and lands, their sports and merriments, and gainful trading, and all for ever oh

that ever they should be born to see such a day that their dwellings should be within the reach of the Contagion! That this dreadful death of all others should befall them! That they should be left thus desolate and forlorn, forsaken of all, abandoned of their neareſt relations, in this time of their greateſt extremity, when they moſt need ſuccor and comfort! Thouſands ſuch hearty groanings, and bitter wailings may you hear: but had you come in amongſt theſe people, a few days ſince, oh what quite other kind of men were they? How jolly and ſecure, following their pleaſures or buſineſs, and would it's like, have laught at him that ſhould have told them of a death ſo near, or of the Judgment that follows after. How few, alas! how very few ſhould you have then found amongſt them, who did at any time cry out, oh blind man that is ſo ignorant of God! oh carnal heart that is ſo averſe from his Laws! Oh how unevenly do I walk! Baſe treacherous wretch that I am, thus to depart from God! Vile and unthankful creature, that ever I ſhould offend a God of ſuch mercy and love: oh that I was delivered from the power of my luſts, the temptations of Satan, and all the diſeaſes of my ſoul! Alas! inſtead of ſuch becoming language as this, you might from the moſt have heard ſwearing and curſing, idle ſongs, filthy and ribbald ſpeeches, or at the beſt frothy, fooliſh, or worldly unprofitable diſcourſe. Poor ſtupid ſinner, then thou waſt ſtabbing and deſtroying thy ſelf, then thou waſt ſeiz'd with the moſt deadly infection. Then had it been no uncharitableneſs nor abſurdity, to have ſet a Lord have Mercy upon me, in Capital Letters, on thy forehead, yea, wiſe and holy men ſaw it there in that wickedneſs that broke out in thy life, and look't on thee as fitter for a Peſthouſe, than converſe; as one not to be accompanied with, except in order to thy recovery. Now muſt we not all in general ſay, that it is tender compaſſion in the great Benefactor to mankind, that he will ſo far concern himſelf with us in our miſerable eſtate, as by any means to awaken us to a ſenſe of it, whilſt there is any poſſibility of a Cure? Sotiſh wretches, that meaſure all events by their correſpondency to fleſh & blood, will not believe there can be love in ſuch ſore Afflictions. They to whom Sin was ſweet, will hardly be brought to like well of thoſe potions which are adminiſtred on purpoſe to make it bitter. How will they loath the Phyſick, who love their very Sickneſs? But all whoſe eyes God ſhall open by his Providences, will ſee abundant cauſe to bleſs and praiſe him for his Love, in working them to a timely apprehenſion of that, which otherwiſe had been their ruine. Tell me man, Is it not a wonderful mercy to be awakened on this ſide Hell, let the means be what they will? If thy preſent ſmart makes thee judge otherwiſe, couldſt thou but come to the ſpeech of thoſe undone ſouls, whoſe hopes are periſht for ever, they would ſoon ſa-

tisfie thee that every thing is tenderneſs, and very great mercy that comes to diſcover ſin, and prevent everlaſting miſery. Oh lay this to heart in time man, and ſtay not too long, till feeling give thee a too clear and undeniable demonſtration of this Truth. If now thou crieſt out thou art undone, becauſe thy Trading's gone, thy Friends dead, or thy Self in danger of Death, and lookſt not about thee to find out, and be affected with greater Evils than all theſe, and ſo to eſcape much greater Sufferings than yet thou haſt felt, 'tis but a little while before thou ſhalt find Arguments reaching to thy very ſoul, which will make thee acknowledge what I now ſay. Oh then, when thou findeſt thy ſelf under the vials of divine vengeance, and haſt taken up thy reſidence amongſt the Devils and damned Ghoſts in the midſt of the burning Lake, what ſlight inconſiderable things not worth the mentioning, will all the miſeries thou underwenteſt in thy life-time appear to thee? What deſirable things will the moſt pinching Poverty, the moſt grievous pain then ſeem, compar'd to what thou wilt endure? What very trifles, meer flea-bitings will thou then judge Famines, Plagues and heavieſt Judgments that can lighe upon men whilſt in the body? Oh what wouldſt thou then give to be where thou waſt, when thou thoughteſt thy ſelf at the worſt? And wouldſt entertain ſuch a ſtate with joy and thankfulneſs, which before thou thought'ſt the moſt miſerable that a man could poſſibly be caſt into. Then thou wilt confeſs, That to be ſhut up from the Society of men, hath nothing of dolefulneſs in it, compar'd to thy being ſhut up under the burning wrath of an unreconciled God. Then at length, whether thou wilt or no, thou ſhalt ſee ſin, and cry out of ſin, and acknowledge 'tis thy ſin that hath ruin'd thee. Now thou canſt in thy cold, faint manner by rote, ſay thou art a great Sinner, and perhaps maiſt curſorily cry God mercy; but then from the very inwards of thy Soul ſhalt thou repent of ſin, with ſuch a kind of helliſh repentance, as is proper to thoſe damned ſpirits in the midſt of their Tortures; ſuch an one as thy Predeceſſor *Judas* felt the beginnings of, when he ran to the Halter for comfort. Then thou ſhalt not only with thoſe, *Rev.* 16. 11. pour out thy Blaſphemies againſt God, the breath of whoſe fury, like a ſtream of brimſtone, kindles and keeps alive thoſe unquenchable flames: but thou ſhalt alſo load thy ſelf with heavier accuſations, than ever any of Gods Miniſters did whilſt thou waſt upon earth. Then thou ſhalt feelingly confeſs thy ſelf ſtark mad & beſotted, and wonder at thy own ſtupendious follie, that ever thou ſhouldſt ſo wilfullie and reſolutelie plunge thy ſelf into that place of wo. And this will be none of the leaſt aggravations of thy torment, to reflect upon thoſe manie ways which God us'd with thee, to have convinc't thee of thy ſin and danger, before it had been too late; of all which thou madeſt light, and wouldſt not

be taught by them; when the hand of God here was lifted up, thou wouldst not see; but then thou shalt see, thou shalt know. Then thou wilt easily grant, that the sharpest suffering that had so shewn thee sin, as to have sav'd thee from this wrath, had been the happiest providence that ever befell thee. Would any man that hath not lost his wits, as well as his gratitude, take it ill from his neighbour that should waken him out of his sweet sleep, when the house is on fire over his ears; yea, though he pinch and beat him black and blew, that he may speedilie rouze him. Now from all I have said then, I would gather, That the heavy hand of God upon a Nation, as it is laid on for sin, so for the most part not meerly for punishment and destruction, but to discover to us the evil of our doings, that they may be repented of, and put away. And so there is much mercie in the midst of these Judgments, if they be improv'd to those ends which their nature is fitted for, and which we are commanded to make of them. The greatest of these Calamities to those that remain, are but like the sounding of a Trumpet, the giving of an Alarm, the shooting off a Warning-piece, the hanging forth of a white Flag; & all speak to this purpose, That though the sins of a Nation have been exceeding great and provoking, whereby the Anger of the most holy God is justly kindled against them, which he sends these his Judgments to testifie, that yet he is willing to put up all former affronts that have been offered, if now at length they will become a reformed people, and with detestation of their sins, turn from them unto God and his holy Ways; but if not, that his anger shall not be turned away, but his hand stretched out still, till he hath made a full end of them, and will follow them with judgment after judgment, till they are cast into the lowest hell. So that you see plainlie, the Rod hath a voice, and is a kind of Sermon, but comes neerer to the sense, and will force an observance more than meer words could do. We could chuse whether we would read a Bible or good Book, or regard a Minister or godlie Neighbor, giving us this very lesson as plainlie, but in a more gentle manner. We could stop our ears, or turn our backs, or harden our hearts against all the most awakening, startling Truths: We could make a pish of the most dreadful threatnings in the Book of God, denounc't against those very sins we committed; we could laugh at our Teachers and Reprovers, and scorn at the offers of their love for our recovery. And when we were sunk into such a deplorable estate, wanting nothing of falling head-long into Hell, but the withdrawing of that miraculous patience which kept us out every moment, then in infinite mercy did our God, who like a wise Physician, suits his potions to the nature of the disease, and temper of his Patients, make bare his Arm, and reveal himself and his pleasure to us, in a way most like-

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ly to affect us, if we who yet survive, be not obstinately bent upon our own destruction. Let us not then murmur or repine: for if our disease be grown to such an height, that without stronger Medicines it would be our death, Is it not all the reason in the World that we should submit to those prescriptions which are proportion'd to it? Whoever thou art that sufferest, thou hast reason to be content, for its thy own doing; thou might'st have hearkned in time to the plain Word of God, and so have escap't this severer discipline. Thou who wilt wilfully deaf to the still voice, Is it not of thy self that a Message is delivered to thee in such terrible Thundrings? If thou hadst not clos'd thy eyes against the gentle light, they had never been so forcibly held open by the hand of God, to see those things which are as clear as the Noon-dayes Sun. If the Word of God had sunk into thy Soul, thou hadst not thus felt his arrows in thy flesh, nor been taught thus with bryars and thorns, like them, *Judg.* 8. 16. God delights not in the smarting and roaring of his Creatures; but yet he that hath bidden Parents by the rod of correction to drive out the folly that is bound up in the heart of a Child, he so loves the Sons of men, that he will not spare his Rod when it may (and if it be not mens own fault, will) conduce to their Advantage. When there is no way but either the gangren'd member, or the life must go, who would not lose that, to save this? Still then here is Mercy: Afflictions, beside the frightful noise, have a clear sense and meaning; beside the heat that scorcheth, they have an informing light. God might in a moment have snatch't thee from Earth to Hell, and there have convinc't thee in such a manner, as leaves no room for thy Reformation, when as now he hath taken away thy Neighbour, and but threatned thee with death, and afforded thee some breathing-time for thy preparation, and for the prevention of the endless death. Thou who art reading these Lines, mightest have been the first at whom God had level'd his Arrows; thou mightest have been snatch't out of the World suddenly, without any other warning than the Word hath given thee, as it may have hapned to others: But since it hath not thus befalne thee, whatever thou maist feel or fear further, thou canst not but acknowledge God treats thee very graciously. Whil'st thou art on this side Hell, thou may'st learn much by the severest Dispensations; and though this seem a cutting, piercing way of teaching, yet is it (as I said before) best suited to thy dulness and senslessness, and most likely to prevail with thee, as not needing so much the pains of a particular Application to thy self, which thou wouldst not be brought to in the hearing of the most searching Sermons. 'Twas but forgetting them, and there was an end of all; but now God speaks words which may be felt, that shall stick longer by thee, and upon which he will keep thy most serious thoughts whether thou wilt or

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no. It did require indeed deep and frequent Consideration to convince thy self of thy lost undone estate by reason of sin, whil'st thou wast swimming in plenty and prosperity, and couldst bid thy Soul take its ease: Alas! What was it to hear of the Wrath of God, a Never-dying Worm, an unquenchable Fire, whil'st men felt all well with themselves; and look't upon those very sins as essential to their Happiness, which the Word represented as their Misery? They were not then likely to think very ill of them, whil'st they perceiv'd no hurt they did them; but now when God shall manifest his hatred (and consequently the evil) of sin, by demonstrations reaching to the very bone; he that groans under these loads, may very readily infer, That surely sin is an exceeding great Evil, which pulls down such Judgments from a compassionate God: which yet at the highest, are but Forerunners of infinitely worse to follow, even Everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord without timely Repentance. And when thou hast so far made advantage of thy Afflictions, as thence to inform thy self of the evil of sin in general, and of thy particular sin; to know that sin is a *Plague*, and to know what is the *Plague* of thy own heart, then thou art in a very fair way towards deliverance and healing. And this is made evident to us, by the words of *Solomon* which we propounded at the beginning, which I intend not particularly to insist on, but to make them the foundation of a more general and lax Discourse.

The import of them seems to be this, That any man under any Calamity whatever, that should be sensible of the sin that procured it, and betake himself to God by Prayer and true Repentance; for him the Wise Man prayes, that he may have Audience and Mercy. For such a man is fit to have the Plaister taken off his Sore, on whom it hath had a kindly influence answerable to the end whereunto God sent it; namely, to shew his sin, humble him for, and turn him from it.

Two things on the By only, I shall hint from these words,

1. That we may very well turn this Prayer of *Solomons* into a Promise, and conclude, That what he beg'd of God, and that with a particular reference to the Children of *Israel*, shall be granted to every man in any place, performing the Conditions here described.

2. Note, That under the work *Know*, is compriz'd the whole performance of all that is required in other places of Scripture, in order to the obtaining of the pardon of sin, and the removal of those Judgments which it had procured. There is nothing more common in holy Writ, than the making words of knowledge, inclusive of the affections and practice also. To know God, frequently comprehends our whole duty to him; for our knowledge of him being the beginning and ground-work of all other Duties,

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and producing them where it is in clearness and power, may very well be put for all. According to this is our English phrase, I'le make you know your Superiours, that is, perform your duty to them. So here to know the *Plague* of our own heart (by which is meant Sin, the disease of the Soul) is as much as to be convinc't of it, to see its Odiousness, to be truly humbled for, and sincerely resolved to forsake it. That it must be a working practical Knowledge, not resting in meer conviction, is evident from the foregoing words, which mention the Prayer proceeding from those *who know the Plague of their own hearts*; the same also follows, *And spread forth their hands to this House*; that is, make their Addresses to God, with some kind of particular reference to the Temple, where he did in a more special manner reside and manifest himself; and thus *Daniel* in Captivity opened his Window toward *Jerusalem*, Dan. 6. 10. Now he that should thus come to God, what is it for? Not only for deliverance, but also to confess sin, the cause of his misery; and if so, then must he be truly grieved for his provocations of the most holy God, and this could not be without promises, and purposes of a Reformation.

Now I need not stand to prove what I before mentioned, That whoever is thus affected shall, if not be freed from the temporal Affliction he lies under, yet be secured from the hurt of it, and have greater blessings bestowed; this, I say, I need not stand to prove, the Scripture being every where so full of Examples and Promises that demonstrate it. And indeed it is fully evidenc't in the very tenour of the Covenant of Grace, which assures Pardon and Salvation, and all things truly good for us, upon the condition of our coming to, and receiving Christ; which none can do, but they who are sensible of their need of him, who have seen the evil of sin, both as to its nature and effects, and are desirous to be delivered from the guilt and pollution; and this sense of sin, and aversion from it in heart and life, is true Repentance; and upon condition of this it was that *Solomon* pray'd for, and God frequently promiseth Mercy; and particularly see his answer to this very prayer, and the promise he made to grant it, 2 *Chron.* 7. 13, 14.

Wherever then the Judgments of God are more Eminently inflicted on a People, it is a sign there are some heinous Transgressions which have deserved them. If the *Plague*, or any such Calamity, seize a Nation, it speaks this much, That there is a *Plague* in the hearts of that People; some such Wickedness which provok'd God to pour out his Wrath upon them. Sin is as the body, suffering usually as the shadow that attends it; the one is as fire, the other as smoke that proceeds from it. Wherefore by the putting away of sin only, can we escape the threatned Wrath, or rescue ourselves out of that we feel. This is very plain, if the knowledge and removal of

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the Plague of our hearts, conduce to our Recovery, then our being seized with it was our misery: and therefore the Cause being removed, the Effect will follow. If the entertainment of *Sheba* into *Abel*, bring *Joab* and an Army against it, then to deliver him to them is the only way to procure their departure, 2 *Sam.* 20.

These several Truths then are plain, and the words we have taken notice of naturally afford them.

1. That God is the Supream efficient cause of all the Sufferings we lie under. *Is there evil in a City* (of affliction that is) *and hath not he done it?*

2. It is for the Sin of a People, that God lays these sufferings upon them.

3. It is a most proper seasonable Duty, in times of such Calamity, to make enquiry into our wayes, that we may discover what is most likely to be the Cause, what is that *Achan* that troubles us? This is the great thing whereof we are call'd in the day of Adversity to consider; and accordingly, the most of my business in my following Discourse, shall be the practice of this Direction: for I shall not particularly handle any of these Observations.

4. If we finding out our sin, bewail and abhor it, put it far from us, and betake our selves to God for mercy and pardon, *then will he hear in heaven, and forgive*; remove from us our Miseries, and restore his Loving kindness.

I shall only answer one Objection by the way, and so pass on to what I chiefly design. Some may say, They have been sensible of, and in some measure humbled for sin, and yet notwithstanding, have been held under as sharp, and as long sufferings as others. Here we must distinguish (1) betwixt National and Personal Judgments: (2) betwixt the Ends and Reasons why they are inflicted: (3) betwixt the Cross and the Curse of it. And so I answer,

(1) If the Judgment be National, as Sword, Famine, Captivity, some great Mortality, and this sent for a National common Sin, it cannot here be expected, That the Humiliation of some few particular Persons should alwayes serve for the averting such Calamities. Nay, the Righteous themselves may be involved in them; as we find there were many good Men carried captive with the rest into *Babylon*, amongst which, were *Daniel*, and the three Children. Indeed sometimes we read of one or more standing in the Gap, and preventing a deluge of Wrath, as *Moses* oft did, but there was then also some kind of general Humiliation; for of the people, it's said, *when God slew, then they sought him*, Psal. 78. 34. And though *Moses* prevailed thus far, that they might not utterly be destroyed, yet very sore Judgments were frequently laid upon them. *Noah* deliver'd himself and Family only, not the old World. *Lot* himself and Children, but not *Sodom* and *Gomorrah*; though then God graciously condescended to hav

have spared them all for the sake of Ten righteous Persons, could they have been found amongst them. But at another time, so great and general were the sins of the *Jews*, That God tells this Prophet, Though *Noah*, *Samuel*, and *Daniel* were there, they should onely deliver their own souls, *Ez.* 14. 14. Ordinarily, 'tis an Humiliation in some competent measure proportion'd to the sin which must appease the wrath of God broke out upon a people. When all *Nineveh* had sinned, and was threatned, it must be a general Repentance that could prevent the Execution of those Threatnings.

(2.) Though particular Persons may not by their Reformation procure mercy to a whole Land, nor yet free themselves from the outward stroke which lights upon the Body of the Nation, yet shall not their labour be lost, but God will have a special eye to them in the common Ruine, and what is in wrath to others, shall be in love to them. They shall have either such preservation from, or deliverance out of the temporal Calamity; or such support in, and advantage by it, that they shall have abundant reason to acknowledg, that their Repentance and Supplications were not in vain. Fear not, poor Christian, if thou be but a mourner in *Zion*, one whose heart bleeds for thine own and others transgressions, though thy Dwelling be in the midst of profane, rebellious Sinners, yet thou shalt not be lost in a croud. It is not the Oaths, and Blasphemies, and Crying Sins of those about thee, that shall drown thy Prayers: but God will hear, and one way or other graciously answer them. If thy Soul, thy everlasting Life be given thee for a prey (as a temporal Life was promised to *Ebed-melech*, Jer. 39. 19. and to *Baruch*, Jer. 45. 5.) thou hast sure no reason to complain. What though the same Disease, and Death seize thee, as doth them? It comes not for the same Reason, nor shall it have the same effect. What though thou wast carried in the same Ship with Traitors into another Country, where they are to be executed; and thou advanced to the highest Dignity, was this any hurt to thee? If Death take thee from the pressures of all sorts, under which thou mayest now groan, and from the Evil to come, and translate thee into the glorious Presence and full Fruition of the Ever-blessed God, this is sure a different thing from being snatch't away from thy happiness into the society and torments of the Devil and his Angels. Wherefore thou hast good reason to acknowledg Gods distinguishing mercy in those his dealings with thee, which to sense may be the same with what others meet with. I might add also the spiritual advantages which accrue to the Godly by Afflictions sanctified, but the other contains this in it, and much more.

(3.) Thy Afflictions may perhaps be more for Trial, than Punishment, and so may be continued, notwithstanding thy endeavour to find out

and forsake sin, but when they have wrought that particular End for which God sent them, they shall be removed. Or they may befall thee for the Cause of God, and a Testimony of a good Conscience, and then thou hast more cause to rejoice in them, than impatiently to seek their removal. Whatever they be, see thou make this use of them, to be more deeply humbled for, and set against sin, which is remotely at least, the cause of all suffering; and to demean thy self patiently and submissively under the mighty hand of God, and in his due time he will exalt thee.

It being then evident, That the knowledge of Sin, is so necessary to the removing the heavy hand of an offended God from off an afflicted Nation; Surely, the great Work we are all call'd to in this day of our sore Visitation, is to give all diligence to know why it is that God contendeth with us; and wherein we have incenst him thus to pour out his wrath upon us, that so we turning from our particular sins, he may turn away his anger, and comfort us. And in order to this, it is the duty of every one, who is an Inhabitant of the Land, in the first place to call himself to a strict account, and impartially to look into his heart, and review his life, and see what he hath done toward the hastening these Judgments upon us, and accordingly apply himself to God, to do his utmost for their removal. Every man hath brought a faggot to the kindling of the Common flame, wherefore every man should bring his bucket to quench it. And here let me warn every soul to beware of a most dangerous temptation, wherewith its like they'l be assaulted, to wit, to think but very meanly, and slightly of their own particular sins, as if they had little or no influence, to the bringing on us such grievous Calamities; and that partly out of self-love, which makes us very tender how we accuse our selves, and ready to extenuate all our own faults, partly, because we may yet be free from the smart, and therefore take but a cold superficial view of our selves; and partly, because when we look upon the evils in grosse under which the Nation lies, we can discern no proportion betwixt them, and our personal offences; and this comes much from our ignorance of the hainous nature of the least sin. Now reflect on thy self, Reader, and tell me, Hast thou not been very ready in the general to cry out, That 'tis for the sins of the Nation we are now afflicted, and to flie out very bitterly against this party, or that, this abuse, and the other Corruption in Church or State, but in the mean time, hast been very backward, to charge and accuse thy self as thou oughtest, as if thou wast not a member of this sinful and suffering Nation. Let thy Conscience answer whether this hath not been thy way, and judge whether this be a just performance of thy duty. If every person thus shift it from himself, where will Repentance be found, and what like to become of us?

If there were an Army to go forth against the Enemy, and one person should draw back, and say, what can he do? He cannot be mist in such a Multitude, nor can he do much against such a numerous force, and therefore desires he may stay at home; and another come, and use the same excuse, and so a third; and at length all that have the same reason, (which indeed every man may pretend to) what's like to become of the War? And yet alas! how doth this senseless Objection generally prevail in the World, in a case somewhat different from this, viz. hindring that courageous Zeal, and industry for the promoting of Religion, and for the destruction of the Devils Kingdom, which beseems every Member of Christ that is listed into his service, by the Baptismal Covenant, wherein he was engaged, to fight under the Banner of Christ, and that without putting in this Condition: that he should have good store of Company to join with, and back him: for without this he may come off a Conquerour. But yet now cries one, What can I do against an overflowing torrent of wickedness? what can I, a weak, and single person do, for the advancement of Holiness, against a wicked raging multitude? what canst thou do? why thou canst strive and die, canst not? But what then, shall no body do any thing, because every man is but one, and hath many difficulties to encounter? Or wilt thou therefore do nothing, because thou canst not expect a successe answerable to thy desires? Or may we not join, and unite our strength, and all set to a shoulder, for the carrying on of the work of the Lord? Be sure thou shalt always have difficulties to try thee: for 'tis thy heart God calls for, he needs not thy hands. Why Man, if thou wert alone in all the World, having such a Leader and Captain as Christ, wouldst thou not stick to his Cause, and keep to his Colours, and die fighting? If not, thou deservest not the name of a Christian. And if there be so few who seek the things of Christ, with how much more vigour and resolution ought those few to bestir themselves, and not also forsake their Lord, because the rest of the world do? But still they should imagine they hear the awakening words of Christ to his Disciples, sounding in their ears, What, will ye forsake me also? But this was a digression.

Let not then, I say, the consideration of thy being a single person, abate any thing of the measures of thy sorrow for Sin: for if all do thus, as all may have the same ground, there will be none found to charge sin on themselves, and acknowledg Gods Justice in all his sharp dispensations.

Wherefore, whoever thou art, into whose hands these lines may fall, my earnest request to thee, yea, my strict Injunction, is this, that thou presently get alone, and soberly sit down to the intent study of thy self: Beg of God, to help thee in this work, and do thou endeavour with all faithfulness,

ness, as in his sight, who will shortly Judge thee before all the world: to rip open to thy self all the baseness that hath been lodg'd in thy heart, all the lusts that have been entertained there. And Consider well thy Life, what known Sins thou hast been guilty of, what Duties thou hast omitted. And then with all speed and seriousness, betake thy self to God, acknowledg thy own vileness, plainly confess that 'tis this or that thy sin, thy looseness, thy covetousness, thy pride, idleness, or voluptuousness, that may have helpt forward his anger. And own it as a token of undeserved Grace, that all manner of woes have not seiz'd upon thee, in thy own person; that whilst so many are Afflicted, and taken out of the world before thee, thou hast warning and leave to prepare, for what may befall thee. And see that thou labour to represent sin to thy self, with all its heightning circumstances and aggravations, that the review of it may more deeply affect thee; help thy Meditations with those doleful miseries so many now lie under, and that in part for thy sins, which yet are but the beginning of woes to the impenitent, and then think, if these are no jesting matters, what is the sin that procured them: Think of that matchless Love, that continued Patience, that clear light, those great Engagements, Purposes, and frequent Promises, that thou hast sinned against, till at length, these Considerations work thee to such an apprehension of sin, that thou canst not conceive of any suffering suited to its demerit, but the everlasting wrath of the most dreadful Majesty: and till thou acknowledg not only thy contributing to the present calamity, but that if the rest of the Nation had been like thee, it would surely have been all in flames before now.

Be sincere and thorow in this humiliation of soul, and take heed of neglecting any such Consideration as may help on the same. Review thy Self, thy Place, and Relations, and what in them was expected from thee, which thou failedst in performing, and accordingly lay it to heart, and judge and condemn thy self and behaviour. If any place of Honour and Service, thou hast not improved thy interest for the rooting out of Sin, and advancement of Holiness, account thy neglgence aggravated by the greatness of the Talents thou wast entrusted with. Wast thou a man of Wealth, Wit, Power; a Magistrate, a Minister, a Master of a Family? Take a strict account of, and humbly bewail thy unfaithfulness to thy several Trusts, and thy carelessness of those duties which thy place did peculiarly engage thee to.

And do not think when thou hast discovered, and confess'd sin, that then thy work is over, as if by thy formalities thou hadst purchased to thy self a dispensation to continue in it; like many that think they serve God sufficiently by going to Church, and saying their Prayers, and in the mean while,

while, make this their serving him, but a kind of indulgence for their sinning against him.

But when thou hast made this Progress, thy next work in order to the obtaining of a Pardon, is, seriously and deliberately to resolve upon the putting away far from thee every known sin, upon mortifying thy dearest lusts, and upon a faithful performance of those duties common to all Christians, and those thy Talents or Relations call for. If thou hast been a debauch'd or covetous Person, a careless misspender of thy mony or time, an Extortioner, or Oppressour, a racking Landlord, or cheating Tradesman, a Sabbath-breaker, and Neglecter of Duty to God, publick or private, or hast liv'd in any the like sins, enter now into a solemn Covenant with God, that by the assistance of his Almighty Grace, thou wilt never more allow thy self in such a course of Impiety. If thou hast abused thy Riches, and laid them out only in making provisions for thy own or others lusts, if thou thoughtest thy Dignity above others, did dispense thee a liberty of sinning without controll, and accordingly hast misimprov'd it; If thou hast been unfaithful in the execution of Justice, with which thou wast entrusted, neither looking after sin to punish it, nor punishing it when it was revealed to thee, but hast rather been a Terrour to good works, than to evil; If as a Minister, thou hast been regardless of the souls of those committed to thy oversight, onely striving to enrich thy self, not better thy people, practising those sins thou hast preach'd against; Or, if as Ruler of a Family, thou hast been negligent, not setting up the Worship of God in thy House, but gone from one day to another without so much as a serious Prayer, nor hast instructed thy Children, nor Servants in the fear of the Lord, whatever, in a word, thy trust, and unfaithfulness to it hath been, confess and lament the same, and resolve for the future to do thy utmost to discharge thy duty, to answer and fill up thy several Relations.

And here again, let not any insist on that silly Objection before mentioned, What can my repentance do to the diverting of Judgments that flow in upon us like a deluge? For if all, I say, use this, who is it must pacifie Gods wrath by their Reformation? But, if thou for thy part wilt practise what I have here cursorily directed, thou knowst not but others may do so also, and so if every one would set to this Work, thy Cavil would be wholly silenced and answered. But again, thou wouldst grant it to some purpose for the whole body of the people to join in hearty humiliation and amendment of their ways, and know, that as to the greatest benefit that would accrue to a Nation by such a general repentance, thou shalt procure it to thy self by this personal performance of thy Duty, that is, either the Affliction it self shall be kept, or taken off thee, or laid on in so much

much mercy, that thou thy self shalt, either here, or in another World, bless God for the same. And I hope this advantage is not inconsiderable, when on the other hand thou remembrest, how certainly thy impenitence will cause thy everlasting, as well as temporal ruine. And take notice from the Text, That God will render to every particular man according to his ways; but this I have before said something to.

Oh that now there were in us all such resolutions unfeignedly to search our hearts, and reform our lives, and with our whole souls turn to the Lord our God, from whom we have revolted! What blessed Effects should we find of this wise and dutiful demeanor! Oh that I knew how to perswade poor souls to this course, before their deadly enemy, who now doth all he can to harden and stupifie them, shall be fully seiz'd of them, past all possibility of a delivery, then shunning as all our endeavours, and challenging us to do our best for the rescue of such undone souls, who must be tormented by him, by whom they would be ruled. But if thou art so far perswaded of the reasonableness of this duty I have been pressing upon thee, that thou art desirous to know thy Self and Sins, wouldest gladly find out, that thou mightest expel the Plague of thy own heart; that I may do something further to help thee in thy self-examination, I shall briefly endeavour to discover what those sins in our Nation are, for which especially we are now plagued by the visible hand of God: And the Lord awaken us all seriously to lay to heart, and remove them far from us, that so God having accomplish'd his own designs upon us, may lay by his Rod, and shew us his wonted favour. And let me beseech thee, Reader, to accompany me with thy Conscience, and let thy eye still be turned off from the Book upon thy self, and if thou feest aby our actions described, cry out, *Guilty, guilty, I am the man!* and so proceed in thy duty, as I have before directed, and shall not again repeat, except on the By.

In the prosecution of this design, I shall say something, 1. Of those notorious crying sins which are to be found amongst us, of which I shall need to say the less, because they are so visible upon us, and so readily acknowledged to be what they are, and because so many Books are written to shame and suppress them: 2. I shall proceed to lay open some such abuses and corruptions amongst us, which are not only sinful in themselves, but also in part, secret causes of the former, which yet perhaps may not be apparent to, nor acknowledged as such by all.

And once again let me desire every Reader to place himself as at the Bar of God, and so to pass a true judgment upon himself, and not to quarrel with the Physitian, instead of falling out with the disease, nor be more averse from hearing the discoveries of the Plague of his own heart, than he would

would be to hear his Physitian tell the Symptoms of the Plague, to convince him he was struck with it, whilst all this was but in order to his recovery. Whoever thou art that are guilty, 'tis thou hast wounded thy self; I would willingly shew thee thy Sores, that they might in time be healed; if thy resolution not to have them search't into, make them incurable, though I may never have the thanks for the offer of my help, yet I know whom thou wilt accuse as the cause of thy destruction, which I would fain have prevented, and shall do what I may in order thereto.

1. In the Front of those Abominations under the Effects whereof we groan, we may well place Adultery, Fornication and Lasciviousness, whether we consider the provoking Nature, or the commonness hereof amongst us. This is a sin we often find attended with exemplary punishments in Scripture, for this, together with their Idolatry, we read of a *Plague* inflicted upon the *Israelites*, *Numb.* 25. whereof died 24000. For *David* commission of this but once, it was threatned to him, *That the sword should never depart from his house*, 2 Sam. 12. 10. And in the New Testament, especially, how frequent are the prohibitions, and how severe the threatnings denounc'd against it? *Whoremongers and Adulterers*, in a peculiar manner, *God will judge*. And for these things sake especially, we are told, comes the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. How strict is our Saviours Exposition of the Seventh commandment, making a lustful glance the breach of it? And upon the mention of that, immediately follows the threatning of the whole body being cast into Hell, without the cutting off the right hand, and plucking out the right eye, the subduing the dearest lusts, and renouncing the sweetest sins, *Mar.* 9. 28, 29, 30. With what repetitions of the same do we find it mentioned, where its spoken against, inculcated again and again, to take the deeper impression? And when the lusts of the flesh are named, usually this is reckoned for the greater part of them in various expressions, signifying much what the same thing, *Colos.* 3. 5. *Mortifie therefore*, &c. Fornication, Uncleanness, Inordinate Affection, Evil Concupiscence, *Eph.* 5. 3, 4. *Gal.* 5. 19. Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these, *Adultery, Fornication, Uncleanness, Lasciviousness*. This sin we find much aggravated by the Apostle, 1 *Cor.* 6. 13, 14. to the end; as that which in a particular manner defiles a man, and renders him indisposed for the in-dwellings of the Holy Spirit. This loathsom wickedness doth especially soften and brutify men, and sinks them from God into the sensitive life, and stupifies the higher parts of the Soul, and renders them unqualified for a converse with that God, who commands all that will approach him, *To be Holy, as be is Holy*. And this is a sin which upon many accounts, breeds as much confusion and disorder in the

world,

world, as it does in particular mens Souls: It must needs therefore incense the most High God, to see his creatures endued with reason for the governance of themselves, to whom he hath prescribed Rules for their walking, to degenerate into such effeminate impotence, as to be hurried away by their own lusts, to such beastial uncleanness.

But alas! How notoriously infamous is our Nation grown for filthiness and lewdness! It cannot now be charged on the Pope alone, That Publick Stews are erected within his Jurisdiction only, yet here's this difference, Those are (if History, and Common Report speak Truth) Licens'd: Ours are not demolish'd. Nor yet perhaps are ours so publick, or certainly known, but yet too publick they are, to the disgrace of our Nation, and Holy Profession. Insomuch that one would think *Venice* was loost from its foundation, and floated into *England*. It is not the loathsomness of that disease which in a just Judgment attends it, that will deter men from this more loathsom sin: Yea, so common is it grown, that by many 'tis look'd upon as a very light matter, no way so hainous as God and his Preachers would make it. And they are ready to censure his Laws as severe, for not allowing them the privileges of Brutes, so strangely doth frequency in sin, wear out the sense of it! And a sensual life doth even blind the understanding, and bribe the Conscience, till at length with much ado, men almost perswade themselves, that they may do what they have often done and are resolved still to persist in. Whoredom, Wine, and new Wine, take away the heart, *Hos.* 4. 10, 11. Even in a Literal sence, the Spirit of Whoredoms cause men to erre. And can it seem strange, if at length God make use of Arguments, which such brutish creatures themselves are capable of, to prove to them, *That their filthiness is highly provoking to his glorious Majesty, who is of purer eyes, than to endure to behold the least iniquity.* His Word condemned this before, as plainly as it could speak, but vile Wretches, whose Senses are their Masters, would not understand it; they acknowledged not his Commands, they either believed not, or would not consider his threatnings, his promises of an everlasting glory, were too thin and spiritual for them to relish, or be allured by. What tell ye them of Rivers of pleasures at Gods right hand? They must have their dirt to tumble and wallow in. Take those who will for them, they must have their Chambering and Wantonness, and lustful dalliances. Nothing must go for reason with them, which contradicted their sensual desires, and is it not just they should then be dealt with suitable to their Natures? That since nothing else would do it, Sense and feeling may at length assure them, their sweet and pleasant sins are a displeasure to God, and most pernicious to themselves: And neither seeing the beginning of Gods wrath upon others, nor feeling it them-

selves

ſelves will prevail with them, God hath judgments in ſtore that ſhal extort from them, will they, or will they not, moſt paſſionate and hearty acknowledgments, that whilſt they were ſatisfying their Luſts, they were moſt ſtudiouſly contriving their own ruine, & treaſuring up wrath for themſelves againſt the day of wrath. If neither Poverty, nor Shame, Pox nor Plague can bring them to ſuch a confeſſion, Hell ſhal bring them to this, and much more.

But as if we were not content with thoſe ordinary ſins of Adultery and Fornication, 'tis reported that we have amongſt us, beſide the effeminate, abuſers of themſelves with mankind alſo. This in *Italy* had been no ſuch monſtrous thing, but can it be accounted leſs in *England*? Both Heathen and Popiſh *Rome* indeed, hath ſtill been infamous for this, amongſt other abominations, and thence 'tis moſt probable, we have derived *Sodomy*, as well as *Popery*. And 'tis well, if amongſt all other projects, for the promotion of *Holy Church*, this be not one, to debauch our Gentry, the better to diſpoſe them for the embracing of that Religion, which can afford them Indulgences at ſo cheap a Rate. Now let any man but ſeriouſly conſider the Holineſs of God, his infinite purity and juſtice, and withall reflect upon his Omnipreſence, his all-ſearching eye that is upon the moſt ſecret actions, think but how he hath been a Witneſs of all that Lewdneſs that hath been committed in all places, in the greateſt privacies and retirements, not bars and bolts could keep him out, not drawn curtains, nor the darkeſt night could hide impure ſinners from his view; conſider we but theſe things, and ſhall we wonder if for theſe wickedneſſes the Lord be wrath with us, and pour out the Vials of his fury upon us? How juſtly might God take up the complaint againſt us, which he did againſt *Iſrael*, Jer. 5. 2, 8. *When I have fed them to the full, they then committed Adultery, and aſſembled themſelves by Troops in the Harlots houſes: They were as fed Horſes in the morning, every one neighed after his Neighbours wife.* And what follows, ver. 9. *Shall I not viſit for theſe things, ſaith the Lord? and ſhall not my ſoul be avenged on ſuch a Nation as this?* And oh now, that all thoſe whoſe Conſciences condemn them for theſe things, would preſently ariſe, & take ſhame to themſelves, & do no more ſo wickedly, leſt worſe things yet befal them. And the good Lord awaken thoſe that are in Authority, to greater vigilance and induſtry for the future, in ſearching after, puniſhing and ſuppreſſing this Impiety wherewith we are ſo poluted, that the Viſitation now upon us, which hath ſo much the ſame cauſe with that laid on the *Iſraelites Numb.* 25. may alſo have the ſame ſpeedy and effectual cure, which we may read, Pſal. 106. 29, 30. *Thus they provok't him to anger with their inventions, and the Plague brake in upon them. Then ſtood up* Phinehas, *and executed Judgment, and ſo the Plague was ſtayed.*

The two next Sins I shall mention, may pass for Appendices to this first, as having been too apparent promoters of it; which yet if they were not, may upon other accounts be deservedly reckoned amongst the provoking sins of the Land.

2. The former, is the Licentiousness of the Stage, where wickedness, and amongst other sorts, wantonness is more effectually taught, than it is decried in the Pulpit. Let their favourers talk what they will, of their advancing Virtue, and shaming Vice, I should put it amongst one of the wonders of the Times, to hear of any man Reform'd by a Play. If to hear oaths, be the way to make men leave them; if to hear the Sacred Name of God profaned, his Word jested with, Religion it self derided, be the way to make men Devout; if to hear Lascivious Discourse, and see Impudent Persons and Actions, be the way to get Modesty, then let us all flock to the Play-House. And next, from the same Reason, let Youth be brought up in a Brothel-house, to learn Chastity; at a Tavern, to avoid Drunkenness; at a Gaming-house, to keep them from Cursing and Swearing. I have heard but few count it any great wisdom in that Nation, where they were wont to make their Servants drunk, to shew their Children the odiousness of it; and surely there was less charity in it, to make some commit wickedness, that they might prevent it in others. When Vice shall be represented, yea, and commendably too; 'tis very great odds, but that they will soon turn Actors when they are gone away, who were even now Spectators of it. What is to be learn't at the Play-house, let the Conversations of most that plead for, and haunt them, evidence. And from the Lives to the Consciences of the greatest Admirers of a Play, do I appeal, Whether ever they got any real good from them, and whether they have not oft got evil. The precious time that is mispent either in seeing, or afterwards talking of them, is not to be look't on as a thing of nothing; however it be slighted by those wretched Sots, that knowing neither God nor themselves, have more time than they know wel what to do with, and therefore are glad to run to their Plays and Sports, for nothing else but to help them away with it; and let not such complain, if a Plague at once ease them of all that trouble, and carry them into an Eternity, where they shal never more have one of those precious moments which here they were weary of, and knew not how to improve. And if they knew nothing they had to do here, but please themselves, God wil cast them into a world, where he will find them employment enough, but of such a nature, that they shall wish a thousand and a thousand times over, that they had spent all their days in the greatest diligence and strictness to have prevented it. Let the giddy careless ones of the world, cry as long as they will, What hurt is there in this, or the other

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Recreation or Merriment, that only wasts their time? If there was any hurt in the fire and brimstone that fell upon *Sodom*, that which caus'd it, was no such harmless thing; and amongst the sins of the City, abundance of idleness is nam'd for one, *Ezek.* 16.49.

Again, were it nothing else but that vanity and frothiness of mind, and unfitness for all Religious duties, which Plays naturally produce, I think this was enough to make all sober persons regard them as little better than Pest-houses: And had our Gallants look't on them as such, and accordingly shun'd them, they might not have had occasion to avoid those which are more dreadful, but less hurtful. Would our wanton Youth, and idle Dames have kept out of these places of Infection, where folly and lightness tainted them both by their eyes and ears, there might have been no such infected places, which they are now so careful to avoid. For my own part, I must needs say, That I took it for a dishonorable reflection upon our English Prelacy, which a modern Poet makes his observation, in a Preface to a Book of Comedies, put forth in these late times, *That Bishops and Plays went down together*. And sure, if they could have hindred it, 'tis as little for their Honor, that they have both been restor'd again. I can scarce (but that I should prevent my self) forbear crying out, when Preachers mouths are stopt, and Players opened, What sad effects are like to follow! Surely the Primitive Christians, whose moroseness in refusing to behold the Roman *Spectacula* (whatever difference there may be betwixt them, and our Stage-plays) was one great crime objected against them, would not have thought such lewd and immodest Shews agreeable with their Profession. But what talk I of them, a company of sullen Souls, much what like the people we are wont to laugh at for Puritans? It is not my business now to argue what a Play is in it self, or what it may possibly be refin'd to, but I speak of them with all those corruptions with which they are now attended. And I would hope the same policy, a little more improv'd, which hath shut up the Play-houses now, to prevent the spreading of the infection, will keep them so, to hinder its return: Whoever may be displeased with this motion, I am very confident, God is not, and then I am indifferent who is.

3. The latter of the two Sins, which I mention'd, as related to the first particular, is Pride; and amongst all the sorts of it, which might very well deserve our notice, and with which no doubt God is provoked, here I mean especially Pride of Apparel; a Sin grown either so impudent, or so universal, that our *Pulpits* do of late dayes seldom meddle with it. I am sometimes ready to think, Ministers are asham'd to concern themselves with such low and ridiculous things (though I wish they are not silent for fear of

offending their fine hearers, which may chance to be of the best in the Parish.) But if people wil be so ridiculous and vain, & manifest such childishness and folly, surely their Teachers must follow them, and condiscend to discover to them all their mistakes, and the subtle ways of the Deceiver of souls, who is very ready to play at any Game for the ruine of poor Creatures; and holds more in his slavery by this very vanity we are now insisting on, than is ordinary thought: we may find the great Apostles not thinking it below them to give precepts in this matter, 1 Pet. 3. 3, 4, 5. *Whose adorning, let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, or wearing of gold, or putting on of apparel,* &c. so also 1 Tim. 2. 9, 10. *In like maner also, That women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefastness and sobriety, not with broidered hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; but, which becometh women professing godliness, with good works.* Which commands how they have been violated, it concerns the guilty to lay to heart. As I would not be thought of their opinion, who place their Religion so much in Meats, Drinks or Apparel, whether Papists in the former, or Quakers in the latter; so I am as far from thinking, that Religion extends not to these things; for though it be seated in the heart, it gives laws to the outward Man. I remember, it is an Observation of a most judicious and learned Divine, That few of those Errors or Sects that have rose up amongst us, but have call'd upon us, to have regard to some neglected truth or duty, as he instanceth in several. And to add one more; I think the *Quakers* are risen up, keeping such a stir about Ribbands, Cuffs, and Lace, and such like things, to shame and condemn all, especially the more strict professors of Religion, for that very great liberty they have assum'd to themselves in their bravery, gaudiness, and changeableness of Apparel. Had the professors of these latter times, made those of the former (who were yet as careful of their hearts as any) their patterns in this matter, they had spoil'd the poor *Quaker* of half his Religion, and not given him an occasion to bring up a Sect that should go in plain and modest clothing. But wise are they who shun both extreams.

Doubtless, this Pride in the outward man, is no such a sleight matter as 'tis commonly made. See *Isa.* 3. 16. *Because the Daughters of Zion are haughty, and walkt with stretch forth necks, and wanton eyes*——*Therefore will the Lord smite with a scab the crown of the head of the Daughters of Zion.* And have we not had multitude, such walking in our streets? Read on that Chap. from the 16 ver to the end, and tell me then, whether God take not notice of, and is not displeas'd with that vanity, and curiosity in apparel. Is not this indeed to be proud of our shame, since cloaths themselves had not been us'd, but for that shame which sin introduc't? And I

may

may well annex this to the sin of wantonness, both as discovering and promoting it: For what's the design of all that art, cost and pains that persons bestow upon attiring themselves, but to appear handsom and well set out? And what's this for, but to court others eyes to be fix't on them? What are naked breasts, and painted, and spotted faces design'd for, but as trapans and snares for the wanton beholders? And the dress it self by the lascivious, is made but a more plausible kind of Pander. It may be worth the noting, that the word rendred effeminate, μαλακοὶ 1 Cor. 6. 9. is joyned with ἱμάτια, and signifies soft cloathing, Matth. 11. 8. which may intimate to us, that there is some relation betwixt such cloathing and effeminency. And whereas by the Texts above mentioned, it seems that Women only were wont to be guilty of this folly; the delicate Youths of our time, will not suffer that Sex to engross this sin, and shame to themselves, but are resolved to go sharers. Oh the intolerable Expence of Money and Time, for the satisfaction of this base monstrous Pride! How many naked backs might be cloathed with half that cost, which is lavish't to put a man in a fools Coat, or to hang about them such baubles as may serve People to stare at? And let the guilty bethink themselves how to answer this their Liberality upon their Lusts, in the day of severe Account, when all Talents shall be reckoned for. By that time at the farthest, if they be not convinc't that persons of Honour and Estates, had been better distinguish'd by their Examples of Charitableness, than by gaudy Garments, or rich Jewels, let me pass for a false Prophet. Though I speak not this of those Robes and Ornaments of the Magistrate, which are necessary for distinction sake, and to acquire greater Reverence to his place and person. But let all those who are at so much charge in their Attire, to let the World know they are Some-body, remember this, *That God entrusted them not with Estates for them thus to make shew of, but to use for his Service.* And I think any body will say, that he's an unfaithful Steward with a witness, who when his Lord hath given him money to lay out in necessary uses, shall throw it about streets, to let people know what store of money he hath the keeping of: Thou who canst condemn such an one, see thou do nothing like him. Whoever thou art that hast been guilty of this fault, surely thou wilt acknowledge this is a day that calls for the laying aside of thy braveries and ornaments, and rather to cover thy self with Sackcloth and Ashes. But if yet thy Pride will not suffer thee to part with them, bethink thy self what thy naked Soul shall wear in that place whither God hath expresly threatned to turn the proud. *Divs* there must not have his Silk and fine Linnen, but instead of them, the purple flames are his unchangeable cloathing.

Is it any wonder then, if as the *Israelites* were plagued for worshipping the Idol which was made of their Ear-rings and Jewels, *Exod.* 32.3,35. We meet with the same punishment for a sin not much different, even for making such Toyes themselves our Idols? Strange judgments may well follow strange apparel; yea, such that wear it, God hath plainly threatned, *Zeph.* 1. 8. And what strange apparel both for Men and Women, have the Devil, Pride, and *France* help't us to? And they who caught this sin one of another, pleading Fashion for their Justification, are they not justly afflicted with a Disease that is Contagious too? The Spots which Pride and Wantonness, those Plagues of the heart, sent into the Face before, are they not fitly punish't with Spots of another Hue! Is it not exceeding just, that they who were so far fal'n in love with their comely Carkasses, that they were wholly devoted to deck and trim them; should have such loathsom Botches, and noisom Biles, and Risings upon them, as might convince them how little better than Carrion is that flesh they so much pamper and adorn? And let them now think what pleasure or ease is to be had from putting on their splendid finest Array, when the Plague-sores shall be running upon them; even much-what the same that *Herod* had from his Royal Apparel, when he was eaten up of Worms, *Acts* 12. 21,23. And if in such a case they would have little mind to stand tricking and trimming them, let them know that the Ulcers and Sores of their poluted Souls, and proud hearts, call for as speedy, and earnest regard, and deep humiliation; and were these once cured, such vanities would be thrown aside. The Lord grant all those who survive, may take warning in time, before their bodies are humbled to the Dust, and their Souls to Hell, for their daring, impudent Pride.

4. Another heinous sin which hath overspread our Land, is Swinish Drunkenness and Gluttony: This also may well be joined with those before mentioned; as being the ground and incentive of all other Lewdness and Wickedness. But alas! How hath the Commonness of this Vice, and mens custom in it, taken away those odious apprehensions which Scripture helps us to, and all sober men have of it? Oh! how are our Taverns and Ale-houses, in all parts of the Kingdom frequented? How doth our whole Nation seem even ready to Reel into its own Ruines, being seized with the Vertigo of an Epidemical Drunkenness? How Gentile, and fashionable a thing is it now grown, for Men to be Drunk, in Civility to the Company they are engaged in? How many Tricks have they devised for the maintaining of this Sin? Notwithstanding the most expres Injunctions and Proclamations to the contrary; Profane Custom hath so overswayed, That drinking of Healths, must be the Test of Mens Loyalty; and of their Respect to those great Ones, to whom the Beginner shall consecrate his Bowl;

as if a disorderliness, which scarce any Beast will be guilty of, must shew good manners; and no man could be a good Subject to his King, which dare not Rebel against his God. Those that dare, are valiant men indeed; but such, as when it comes to tryal, will do little more for their Prince, than they do for their Maker. So general is this practice of excessive drinking grown, that both the Gallant and the Clown, Rich and Poor, Young and Old, yea, Women as well as Men, City and Countrey, are sadly infected with the same. In too many places, he's scarce accounted a good House-keeper, that lets his Neighbours go out of his house sober. How can men entertain their Friends, or renew their Acquaintance, or drive any Bargain, without betaking themselves to some Tipling-house? Yea, how frequently are Drinking-matches appointed, for no other purpose, but to pour down their Liquor? What multitudes are there, *who rise up to drink strong drink, who tarry at night till wine inflame them?* Yea, to such an height of wickedness are we grown, that as if there were some excellency in sinning, men strive for the Mastery in it; and to be able to Drink down others, goes for a very Manly faculty. Such Enemies have we got to the Cross of Christ, *whose god is their belly, whose glory is their shame.*

And is there not the same Reason, that our Crown of Pride, and the Drunkards of *England* should be trodden down, as well as of *Ephraim? Isa.* 28. 3. Is it not just, that they whose Intemperance hath often deprived them of their Reason, should be taken with a Distemper that may strip them of the use of it? That in those very streets where men have staggered and fallen down Dead-drunk, they should there fall down stark-dead?

The like might be said of Gluttony, and Luxurious Feastings, a sin more confin'd to the greater Sort, who can make sufficient provisions for the flesh, to fulfill the Lusts thereof; abundantly confirming what the Wise man hath told us, *That the prosperity of Fools destroy them.* And what a wiser than he hath expressly affirmed, though sure believ'd but by very few, *That Rich men do difficultly enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.* How much money is expended but once, to furnish the Tables of these gluttonous Epicures? How do they sacrifice Gods creatures meerly to their Lusts, eating only for pleasure, and to keep themselves alive from one Meal to another, without thinking of that service they owe to God for all. *They have lived in pleasure, and been wanton, nourishing their hearts as in a day of slaughter*, as St. *James* speaks, *Chap.* 5. 5. What hath been the life of too many of our Gentry, but to eat and drink, and sleep, and rise up to play? Here's the improvement of the many special Engagements God hath laid on them to honour him, that they of all will do least to his Honour. What an exact description may we read of many of them, *Amos* 6. 3, 4, 5, 6. *Ye that put away far the evil*

day,

day, and cause the seat of violence to come near: That lie upon the beds of ivory, and stretch themselves upon their couches, and eat the lambs out of the flock, and the calves out of the midst of the stall: That chaunt to the sound of the Viol, and invent to themselves instruments of musick, like David: That drink wine in bowls, and anoint themselves with the chief ointments: but they are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph. And there read on, you may find their doom: *If men will bid their Souls take their ease, eat, drink, and be merry, well may they expect quickly to hear, Your Souls shall be taken from you.* And when they are thus provoking God to anger, with their eating and drinking; what wonder if his Wrath fall upon them, whil'st the meat is in their mouths? If they so far forget their own natures, and the use of his Creatures, as wholly to be devoted to the satisfaction of their raging sensual desires, which they ought chiefly to have denied; and if like unprofitable burdens of the Earth, they feed themselves only that they might live longer to taste the pleasure of their delicious meats and drinks; how just is it, that when like Swine they were fatted, they should then be brought to the slaughter?

5. As the next provoking Sin which is rife amongst us, I shall reckon Swearing, Cursing, and Profaning the most holy Name of the dreadful God. A sin less excusable than Epicurism, because I know no Sense gratified with it: but though it be less Bestial, yet is it more Diabolical. Oh the horrid Oaths that have been daily belched out by the black-mouth'd Sons of *Belial!* Who almost could walk the streets of the City without stopping his ears? Or else he was like to hear the Name of God abused; the Life, the Blood, the Wounds of our dear and precious Lord tost to and fro, by the mouths of wretched Swearers! Who, that had heard all the Oaths and Curses that were vented but in one day, in this one City of *London*, would not have admired, that their Tongues, who were thus set on fire on Hell, did not set our whole Nation in a flame! Oh well is it for us, that our God, who is Mercy it self, rules in the World? How quickly would all created Patience, though meeting in one Person, be quite tired out, and worn away? These hellish Exhalations streaming forth from the hearts and mouths of corrupted men, whereby they have assaulted even Heaven it self, might justly have been kindled by the Wrath of God, and have been returned upon our heads in showres of fire and brimstone. And if the polluted breath of these kind of Wretches, have infected the very Air we breath in, 'tis not to be thought strange in the least. Could those vollies of Blasphemies which have been discharged against the glorious Majesty, do any other than turn to a black Cloud, which should light heavily upon us? Some think it impossible for the Soul of man so far to sink into the Devilish nature, as to sin meerly, to sin without a regard to some carnal interest:

interest; but if any instance will evidence it, I think 'tis Swearing and Cursing! 'Tis possible I know (though this is far from excusing it) for Passion to transport men to an Oath; and sometimes a desire to be believed, sometimes an ignorance that they do amiss, may betray them into it; but for men to interlard their ordinary discourse with full-mouth'd Oaths, priding themselves therein, as if Gentile and Graceful, What Excuse can be invented for such horrible Practises? nay, when men shall set themselves purposely to swear, and devise new Oaths that shall be *al a mode*, What possible pretence have they for this? And hither may I refer those strange, unheard of Prodigies of profaneness; Wickednesses too transcendental to be rank'd under any ordinary Tropick; Such as killing men in a *bravado*, drinking Healths of their own blood, yea, Healthing it to the Devil himself: for such—I know not what to call them, as these are we reported to have had amongst us; nay, (canst thou imagine it Reader?) far worse than these, which let those mention who are Masters enough of our Language, to render them in fit terms, for I profess, I cannot. So unwilling are the daring Fellows of our days to go to Hell in the old way! It cannot consist with the greatness of their Spirits, to be wicked at these low rates, that their silly Ancestors were. In all they do, they would be taken notice of, and appear above the Vulgar; and would proclaim to all men, that they are none of those melancholly, weak-brain'd, or mean-spirited men, who are so aw'd with the apprehensions of a God, that they dare not sin freely and boldly. No, but they have so far conquer'd those prejudices they had conceived of vertue, and vice, sin and shame, that they dare in the open Sun commit those sins, which Cowards run into the dark for. They are not asham'd to own themselves the Devils Vassals, but dance in his fetters whilst all men hear their rackling. What other design can these swaggering sinners have in such a carriage, but audaciously to affront the great Majesty of Heaven and Earth in the highest manner they are capable? Ah besotted Wretches! let me bespeak you in the language of the Prophet, Do you know against whom you shoot out the lip, and make a wide mouth? What could your wit find no other way to vent it self, nor your malice, any other object? Had you no cheaper way to undo your selves? Were you afraid lest you should have miss'd of Hell? What? did you indeed mean by your blasphemies to dare God to his face? would you force him to give a convincing evidence of his Being? If so, I hope you are satisfied by this time; if not, you shall be shortly. Was you resolv'd to try how far his Patience would extend? Did you fear he was so merciful, that you should never feel his wrath? Or were you in such haste to be with your everlasting Companions, the Devils and the Damned, that you thought

your Judgments lingred, and Damnation ſlumbred, and would therefore do your beſt to haſten it? Or were you ſo fully bent on the ſatisfaction of your luſts, that you were reſolv'd to purſue them even to the burning lake, & therefore thought you had e'en as good go to hell for ſomthing, & would make to your ſelves as good a bargain as you could, and do all that in you lay before hand, to revenge your ſelves of that God, who will there treat you ſo ſeverely? or were you now betimes inuring your ſelves to the language of Hell, that you might not be to learn when you ſhould be thrown thither? Theſe are ſtrange ſuppoſitions the Reader may think, but not ſo ſtrange as the ſins I am ſpeaking of, and for which I can ſcarce aſſign other reaſons than ſuch as theſe. And ſhall we wonder, when ſuch Rebels are riſen up againſt the Lord, if he grow jealous for his great Name, and ariſe, & vindicate his Glory & Power, from the contemptuous affronts of inſolent Mortals. Moreover, how many times have people in their execrations wiſht, That the Pox & the Plague might take themſelves, their children, ſervants or cattel? And can they find fault, if at length, their deſires are granted? yea, how many roaring Ruffians have we got, who, as if they were already entred into the familiarity of Devils, make nothing of it to curſe themſelves to the pit of hell in their common diſcourſe; who can ſcarce ſpeak a ſentence without their *Damnee's* and *Sinkmee's*? whoſe tongues, were they pluckt out by the roots, it was a puniſhment no way ſuited to the heinouſneſs of their crime. But let them, if they think fit, ſtay a while longer in their contempt of God and his threatnings, & their reſolute diſobedience to his holy laws, & if nothing elſe wil ſerve their turn, they ſhal too ſoon to their ſorrow, find all their accurſed prayers accompliſht. The Devil, whom they have ſo oft wiſht to fetch them, ſhall very ſhortly have that Commiſſion which he eagerly waits for, & then let them ſay whether the dreadful God be to jeſted with, or abus'd: And then at length ſhall they hear that terrible queſtion thundered againſt them, *Have you provok'd me, ſaith the Lord? Have you not provok'd your ſelves to the confuſion of your own faces?*

6. Amongſt the reſt of our common ſins, we may account Covetouſneſs, together with all the diſcoveries, effects and branches of it; Such as Oppreſſion, Extortion, Bribery, Injuſtice, either in Judgment, or mutual traffique, over-reaching each other, Uncharitableneſs, and grinding the faces of the Poor. I put all theſe together, as having ſome relation to each other and being all neglects of duty betwixt man and man. If Idolatry ſo often brought the Plague, or other ſufferings upon the *Iſraelites*, why may not Covetouſneſs, which is Idolatry, by the ſame reaſon bring it upon us? Is it not as diſpleaſing to God, to have men adore an heap of Gold and Silver, or their Houſes and Lands, as an Image of Gold made up into humane ſhape?

ſhape? And is it not as great a ſin, for the heart to run a whoring after theſe things, as to bow the body to an Idol? And how are men almoſt every where ſet with all their might and main to thrive, and riſe in the world, to lade themſelves with thick clay, and here to lay up their Treaſures? Was it not time for us then to be told, and told to the quick, what we were doing? That we were not yet at home, and muſt not therefore think of ſetling here? Single deaths of men, when there died now one, then another, had but little effect on us, to make us ſenſible of our own Mortality, and therefore multitudes are ſwept away before our eyes, to ſee if that will have any more influence upon us. With what unwearied, & uninterrupted pains & diligence did the moſt drudg about their earthly affairs, from morning to night, weeks end to weeks end, without any ſerious regard to the buſineſs they came into the world for? but were ſo deeply faln in love with preſent things, that they dreamt not of a removal? and with al were ſo plung'd over head & ears in their cares & buſineſſes, that they could not find a time for any ſerious conſideration of the matters of their ſouls? how juſt is it then that God ſhould take them off by his hand, if they knew not how to diſengage themſelves? & ſnatch them away from thoſe eſtates which they knew no better how to improve, but were even neſtling themſelvs in them, as their durable poſſeſſions. And I hope all who are engag'd in ſuch affairs, will call themſelves to a ſtrict account whether there have bin no ſuch unjuſt ſentences pronounc'd either in condemning the innocent, or acquitting the guilty, that may have provok't the juſt God to anger againſt us; & let all mercileſs rich men, cruel extortioners, oppreſſive landlords, lay to heart their unmercifulneſs, rigor or injuſtice to the poor, to the fatherleſs and widow, whoſe cries may have reacht the ears of the Lord of Sabbath, *Jam.* 5. 4. and caus'd him to riſe & plead their cauſe, by ſending his Judgments upon an hard-hearted Generation. And doubtleſs that great want of Charity, & Chriſtian compaſſion which ought to be in us, towards our Brethren, in their neceſſities and miſeries, may very juſtly have hardned God himſelf againſt us, and caus'd him to be deaf to our Cryes and Prayers. How many have had their money and precious things which they had hoarded, left to ſtrangers, or rifled by thieviſh hands, which they might in their life time ſo well have employ'd for Gods honor, and their own good? But alas, amongſt the many that profeſs the faith, how few are there who will take a Promiſe from God as good ſecurity? And amongſt ſo many that ſay they love God, how few have manifeſted it by their love to their Brother? And hath the matter been mended, ſince we have been under this ſore viſitation? nay rather, hath it not been worſe? O how have men ſhut up their bowels againſt their poor, neceſſitous, viſited Brethren? And ſuffered ('tis ſadly to

be feared) thousands to starve for want of needful supplies, whilst they have had enough for their Lusts, and to spare; and need not (which yet in such a day especially is our duty) have pincht their own back or belly to have afforded them relief. And this cruelty have men been guilty of whilst many of them had reason every day to expect their own death; but they have seem'd resolv'd to hold, and grasp all as long as possibly they can, and to cleave closer, if they knew how, to their dear Mammon, of which shortly they must take their sad, and last farewell. Oh! who but Infidels would not have sent their treasures before them thither, where they expect shortly to be themselves translated! But the sin I chiefly intended under this head is, the common dishonesty in buying and selling; mens Defrauding and Overreaching each other; a practise which I fear, *London* hath bin more guilty of, than *Corinth*, which yet was charg'd with it, *1 Cor. 6. 8.* And it concerns Citizens & Tradesmen especially, to enquire into themselves upon this account, as being most expos'd to temptations to it. Thou who yet survivest, examine thy heart, look back on thy former course of life, in thy following the world. Does not thy conscience accuse thee for having grown rich by lying, cheating and deceitful ways? Hath not thy Conscience many times flown in thy face, for thy notorious falshoods, and crafty projects, and unlawful devices, to put off thy wares, and enrich thy self? Alas, men are ready to plead a kind of necessity for their sin, and say, If they should always be upright, plain, and true, they should never know how to live. Is not the world then come to a brave pass? what a matter of course is it with Tradesmen to tell multitudes of lyes to every Customer almost, and never make matter of them, so they but help off their Commodities? They can go their ways, and wipe their mouths, and there's an end; but hold, God will not put it up so. So they can but now get a pound, or a shilling, how little do they regard the time of reckoning for all again? They know not how to keep up such serious thoughts in the midst of their noise and busle, in buying and selling. But if they can't, God will take them off their hot trading, and give them leisure enough to consider what they have been doing. And hath he not done thus? 'Tis well for those who so improve their breathing space here, that they have not this work to do in the other world. All that men could think of, was, that money was to be got, which way it mattered not so much. And well had it been for them, if God had made no more matter of it; but believe it, he hath taken a strict notice of all thy ways, and recordeth them with greater exactness, than thou wast wont to do thy debts in thy Shop-Book. See thy sin describ'd and threatned, *Mic. 6. 10, 11, 12, 13.* After he had spoke of the Lords Voice crying to the City by his Rod, ver. 9. then follows, *Are there yet the treasures of wicked-*

ness in the house of the wicked, and the scant measure, which is abominable? Shall I count them pure with the wicked balances, and with the bag of deceitful weights? For the rich men thereof are full of violence, and the Inhabitants have spoken lyes, and their tongue is deceitful in their mouths; Therefore also will I make thee sick in smiting thee, in making thee desolate because of thy sin. Oh how many are there that will be Religious, as far as coming to Church, and being devout there, and making some outside Profession, comes to, who yet in their dealings are stark naught, and will be dishonest for a small gain? In the Church, and perhaps a little in their Closets, they can afford to do that they call serving of God, but in their shops nothing at all. Oh by that time all's reckoned for, when the money's gone, but the sin in getting it must be answered for, how will men wish, and wish again they had been clear from this guilt, though they had been the meanest Beggars in the Land! Now how just is it men should be snatch't from those Estates, to which they never had a true Title? And if indeed they cannot drive a Trade without so great miscarriages, Is it not time that their houses and shops should be shut up?

7. The next Sin we shall take notice of, is Murder; which surely, if any, hath a crying voice. *Abels* blood soon wrought Heaven with its cry for vengeance. And how many Murders have we daily heard of, committed amongst us? How common is it grown for the Gallants of our Times, to Sacrifice one anothers Lives to their Lusts, to their Passion, or their Pride? And I wish that the Impunity of some, may not have encouraged others. Is it not time then for God to take the Sword into his own hand, and let his audacious Creatures know, That their Lives they are so prodigal of, are his, and at his disposure? And if they value them at no higher rates, they have no reason to complain if they are taken away, since they knew no better what to do with them. If indeed they are so weary of the World, they shall stay no longer in it.

And here especially, let me bring to remembrance that Heathenish practice of Duelling; which of late is grown so much in fashion, that none must pass for a Gentleman, but he who dare murder his Brother; and to be an Hector, is more commendable than a Christian. The Example and Precepts of that pattern, and Master of Meekness the Holy Jesus, the very mention of them is little less than ridiculous to our brave Fellows. Alas! those Precepts seem suited to the mean state of Christianity, when poor Fishermen and Tent-makers were the Preachers, and Tradesmen like them, were for the most part Retainers to it; but we must have them calculated again for those of a more elevated Meridian; *viz.* for our Gentry, who had the luck to be born of Parents that were call'd Christian. The Jesuite must fit them with Rules that shall allow for their birth and breeding: for

surely

surely Christ never meant to have Gentlemen his Disciples, when he tyed them up to such strict Commands, not practicable by men of their blood and spirits. Religion now adayes is thought to emasculate men, and render them tame and cowardly. Basely to submit themselves to their own unruly passions, with these is Courage: To be Bears and Tygers, is accounted Gentile and Manly. These are the Lordly Creatures that are so tender of their Honours, that they will rather violate the Laws of the great God, than the least punctilio of it. To humour or win a Fantastical Mistress ('tis well they are not in hearing when I call her so) they durst venture upon the Wrath of their Maker. For the Wall, or the Way; for a wry Word, or a Straw, they durst venture their Necks to the Halter, and their Souls to the Devil. Are not these the true Sons of Valour? Such that even in cold blood, and upon sober deliberation, dare damn themselves. And why? because forsooth they are afraid of being call'd Cowards, and abused by every body else, should they have past by one injury. They could tell what this was, but what the Hell they leap't into was, they knew not till they found themselves there; and by that time, poor Wretches, how was their courage cool'd? And now at length, you valiant Fighters, wonder not if God himself be stept into the Field against you. What? do you think you have met with your match yet? Nay, but he hath not yet appeared with all his strength. He hath only sent one of his Warriours, Death sitting upon the Pale-horse; but see what a terrible Second there is, Hell follow'd after him, *Rev.*6.8. But come try your Manhood upon this first. The hour he appoints, is when he pleaseth; the Weapon he now chiefly fights with, is the *Plague*, take you what you will; the place is *London*. What Cowards, do you turn your backs now? Are you afraid to dye, and yet are not afraid to be damn'd? What will you laugh at Hell, and now quake at Death, and flie from it? But think not your heels can secure you, nor any place you can flie to, sooner or later be sure he'll find you out. What did you challenge God to the Combat, and now do you run for't? Can you deny it? What else meant all your open, impudent wickedness, but to bid God do his worst? For to sin you were resolved, let him right himself how he could. God threw down his Gauntlet, when he said, *The soul that sins shall dye.* You took it up, when you rush't upon those sins. What, you miserable Caitiffs, you Children of the Devil, who is a Murderer, must you stand upon your terms, and command observance from your Company, and will draw at the least Affront, and shall God be careless of his Honour? Was it not present death for a man to throw a glass of Liquor in your face? And have you done less against God one day after another, by pouring down your superfluous glasses? Did the Lye deserve the stab, and shall you go Scot-free,

who

who have so often given the Lye to God himself, speaking to you by his Word and Ministers, his Spirit and your own Consciences? Nay, what you count the most unsufferable Reproach, have you not been ready to interpret Gods Patience for Cowardice? Well, you are wont to call your selves Gentlemen: Know then, That for these, and a multitude of such Affronts, God demands satisfaction, and have it he will one way or other. Your speedy Repentance, and believing recourse to the blood that speaks better things than that of murdered *Abel*, may appease him; otherwise, when he makes Inquisition for blood, he'll take the proudest of you by the Throat, and cast you to the Tormentors; and verily you shall not come thence, till you have paid the utmost Farthing.

8. Another very heinous Sin amongst us, is Prophanation of the Lords Day, and Neglect of the Worship of God. How many are idling away their time at home, or which is worse, sinning it away in Tipling-houses, whilest they should be attending the Publick Service of God? Or if they afford their bodily presence there for an hour or two, how soon after do they betake themselves to their Pleasures, as if the rest of the day were their own? Or as if when they had prayed to God, to keep them that day without sin, they might boldly commit it? As if when they had beg'd of God to teach them to keep (amongst the rest) the Fourth Commandment, they might then take Liberty to break it? And by their after-practice, one would judge their prayer had been, *Lord have mercy upon us, and give us leave to break this thy Law.* Some go to their Drunken Companions, some to their Sports; others to walk idly in the streets or fields; and the most to their common, vain, and worldly Discourse: To any thing, rather than to private Meditation, or Family-repetition of what they have heard. How far are men from spending this day, as beseems those who have Immortal Souls to care for, and can spare but little time on Week-dayes for such Employments! Oh how exceeding few are there that are willing rightly to inform themselves of the nature, use and end of this day, and accordingly to improve it? As it is a day set apart to commemorate not only the work of Creation, but chiefly of Redemption by Christ our Lord, and especially his Resurrection, that being to him as a kind of rest from his Labours: And moreover, as it may be to us a Type and a Resemblance of the Eternal Sabbatism we shall enjoy in the Heavens; when we shall rest from all sinful, troublesom, and bodily works, and be wholly employ'd in the admiration, and praise of that Divine Love, which contriv'd and wrought our Redemption and Salvation. To have leave thus to spend a day with and for God, would be sufficient to engage holy and ingenious Souls, with all alacrity and thankfulness to embrace the opportunity. Such would be asham'd to stand

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reasoning and enquiring whether they might not have it with God, and rob him and themselves of a good part. What a strange tedious thing is it for poor Creatures that know not God, nor their own necessities, to be obliged to consecrate one day in seven to spiritual services, for which, awakened and experienc't Souls think their whole Life-time little enough? How many have we had crying, like those, *Amos* 8. 5. *When will the New Moon be gone, and the Sabbath over?* That they might again to their pleasures, or employments: Nay, our people have been in more haste than so, they could not stay till the Sabbath was over, but must to their bargaining, their buying and selling. How frequent is this with many Shop-keepers in the City, when no necessity requires it? Well, if indeed you are so eagerly bent on your business, that you will not keep a Sabbath which God commands you, he'll force you to another kind of Sabbath than this, which you shall have more reason to cry out, *When will it be over?* You shall be made to rest from your Works longer than this comes to, if you cannot afford God that small space of time he affords you: And you that were wont to be so weary of the Prayer and Sermon, and shift postures, first up, and then down, peeping at the Glass, or your Watch: Is it not equal that you should be held with those pains which shall make you weary for somewhat? When you shall turn from side to side, but get no ease, and count all the tedious hours of the Night, expecting every moment to sink into that woful state, where are no more dayes, or nights, or hours; where you shall never have a moments rest through a whole Eternity! And then say whether the service of God, or the sufferings you feel from God, be the more tedious. If wicked Wretches thus loosely encroach upon the Lords own day, may we not well fear lest God should depopulate our Land, that so at length it may enjoy its Sabbaths? And is it not just they should be seized with a Disease, which admits not of a Minister to visit them, who in the time of life and health did so little care for their Minister? How many who have been shut up from all Converse with men, were wont formerly to excommunicate themselves from the Publick Congregation? And if they would not stir over their Threshold to the Church, 'tis just they should not stir out at all. And may we not see many doors praying now, whose Owners were not before wont to pray either in Publick, or with their Families on the Lords day, or any other time? Nay, perhaps might be deriders of all serious Praying, and only use to take Gods Name in vain with their Formalities: Is it not just then, that those who were utterly unacquainted with, and it may be jeer'd at, praying by the Spirit, should be taught by the feeling of their flesh, to groan out an hearty *Lord have mercy upon us.*

9. Another very common Sin, somewhat related to the former, is the contempt

contempt and abuse of the Ordinances of Christ, especially the Lords Supper; whilest so many partake of the Table of the Lord, and in some sense of the Table of Devils; which, what is it but to provoke the Lord to jealousie, as if we were stronger than he? 1 Cor. 10. 21, 22. Many there are indeed, whose Hypocrisie and Treachery is only known to God, and though the Minister cannot, yet these he will find out. To vow obedience to God, whil'st we intend and perform nothing lesse, this is such a wickedness, so solemnly to mock him, as he will not bear at his creatures hands: And how many Thousands are guilty of such falshood and perjury? For the breach of these Oaths be sure the Land mourns. When each member of the Church thus Covenants to Reform himself, and yet still continues in wickedness. How is the receiving this Sacrament made a meer matter of course? And if it be remembred for a day it's well, but the engagement then made is presently forgot. But believe it, God will not forget it so. How many have we, that are Celebrating the remembrance of Christs death to day, who are Crucifying him again to morrow? And such as these, I chiefly intend, who whil'st they customarily renew their obligations, to live to the honour of their Lord, do what in them lies to put him to an open shame. And where is the place where difference is put betwixt the precious and the vile, and any scruple made of casting Pearls before Swine, Childrens bread to Dogs? Whosoever's fault this is, that it is a fault, and a very heinous one too, can hardly be denied by any that use to read, what Qualifications Scripture requires of all that are admitted, not only to some more solemn Ordinances, but into Church-communion. If covetous persons, Drunkards, Swearers, Whoremongers, and all disorderly Walkers are to be noted, withdrawn from, and not to be eaten with (take the word in what sense you will) then let the most impartial, charitable person judge, what a vast and sad difference there is betwixt the precept, and our practice. *Si hoc sit Evangelium, non sumus Evangelici.* Where are they that walk after this Rule? And 'tis not likely that this very sin which brought sicknesses and death upon the *Corinthians*, should have lost its provoking nature by the tract of time, or any difference of circumstances betwixt us and them. It cannot surely be thought that the Commonness of this miscarriage, nor yet the difficulty and seeming impossibility which some are apt to pretend of having it remedied, should render it lesse displeasing to that Holy God, who is so jealous about his Sanctuary. If *Uzzah* was smitten for his too bold officiousness in staying the tottering Ark, and 50000 men of the *Bethshemites* for their curiosity in prying into it, how shall they be able to stand before the Lord in the day of his vengeance, who have so profan'd his holy Ordinances! Interest sometimes restrains men from punishing a crime that

is universal, but believe it, this takes no place in God: No, to his mercy we owe it only, that our punishment is not as extensive as our guilt. But surely this his Besom of destruction with which he sweeps away multitudes, clearly speaks it self sent to scourge a general sin, and I know none more than this we are now upon. And it is not mens Laziness, or carnal interests; their loathness to displease either the Vulgar, or Great Ones, by whom they live, that shall here, or in the day of their appearance before the great Lawgiver and Judge, excuse their disobedience to his so expresse and peremptory Injunctions. To tell them then, that his Commands were inconsistent with their ease, or the favour of men, which is the voyce of their present negligence, will hardly excuse them who have so often told others, That no man can be Christs Disciple (much less then a Minister) without very great measures of Self-denial. If any of those, whom they now please by their cowardice and compliance, will then bear them out, they are safe enough, but if that is not to be expected, they had best bethink themselves in time, how to give a comfortable account of their Stewardship. Though private members performing their duty, may not justly pretend the Pastors negligence to justifie a Separation; yet how far others assuming a power to themselves, if they execute it not, will excuse those who are deputed to dispense these mysteries, when they shall deliver them to such whom they have good reason to think unworthy, it behoves them who are concerned well to consider. The unworthy receiver himself, it may be, hath some pretence or other, to shift the blame from off him, as that he was never admonished nor suspended; but all these evasions will be too gross to pass for current with a just Judge. I hope 'tis no scandalous thing to bewail the want of, and earnestly desire a Discipline amongst us, as guilty as the world is grown: By whom, or with what circumstances managed, it matters not so much, so we might have the thing; that the plain and indispensable Laws of Christ may be executed; that those very Constitutions which are fundamental to such a Society as Christ hath appointed his Church to be, may not be violated; that there may be discerned some difference betwixt the Church and the World, beside what a bare Opinion, or verbal Profession makes; that only the credible profession and discovery of that faith and holiness, which makes a man a Member of Christ, may serve for his being accepted as a Member of the Church. And I may very safely say, That all they who have promised to God they would see to the removal of such like corruptions as this I have been taxing, are indispensably oblig'd to perform it, since this is no more than what was included in their Baptismal Covenant. Whatever variety of apprehensions there may be as to this point of Discipline, yet methinks so much as is judged lawful and necessary, by those who

who have power enough in their own hands, should not be neglected: but it would very well deserve their care, to see their own Laws put in Execution.

10. And now we speak of the Execution of Laws, we may very well mention it as a most sad and shameful, and very provoking sin, that after there is so much provision made for the restraint and punishment of Vice, by many good and wholsom Laws, there should be no more fruit of them seen, for want of their being Executed. How rare is it now adays to hear of a man punish'd for Drunkenness, Swearing, Sabbath breaking! And is it any other than natural, to see theft, and the like impieties abound, whilst the multitude that are most ruled by present things that reach their flesh, find no hurt come of their Prophane and Licentious courses? And if men neglect their Duty, can it be expected but that God should take the Sword of Justice into his own hands, and punish the Rebellion? If it be demanded, What can be done more than to enact Laws, and appoint men to put them in force, and by a Solemn Oath engage them thereto? If it may not appear presumption, I would answer, That it is also of as great consequence to see the Execution of Laws committed to them, who give probable grounds to believe, that they will be faithful to their trust. *Scanderbegs Sword in a Cowards, or Childs hand is like to do no great service.* The truth of it is, the most conscientious look upon the charge as so weighty, that they dare scarce undertake it, much less do they ambitiously seek after it; and if they should, 'tis a question whether the less deserving competitors would not make a greater interest, and prevent them. But were all who are concerned to vigilant as they should be, no doubt but there might be a very great redress of this mischief. Was there a diligent inspection to discover, and a willingness to embrace them, there might be found many, who notwithstanding the great discouragements they might meet with, would for the Honour of God, and service of their Country, engage themselves in this burdensom, but honourable Employment. But can they be zealous for God, and for subjection to his Laws, who will not themselves be rul'd thereby? Far be it from me to speak evil of the Rulers of the People. I know it is the duty of all to do what they can to preserve to their persons that Honour, which may contribute to the successful discharge of their Functions. And therefore it is no way fit to charge them with Crimes upon suspition, or bare report, nor to reprove them for secret sins publickly, nor to do it in that manner that may procure them Contempt from the People: But if the miscarriages of men in Authority are so notorious, that 'tis in vain to endeavour to conceal them, and when the offenders are such, and so many, that there is no way to deal with them, but

by an open publishing of their reprehensi n, and consequently of the fault they are reprov'd for; it cannot in that case be justly censured for irreverence or undutifulness, to mind them modestly of their duty, and their neglects of it: especially whil'st the discourse is general, medling with no mans person, nor reflecting on any but the guilty. Indeed it may very well become those who are more especially concern'd, and who have the advantages of access to, intimacy with, and interest in Magistrates and great Ones, to deal with them, though with that submission and meekness which beseems Inferiours, yet with that freedom and plainness which beseems Friends, and Christians. Such that have liberty to speak, without gratifying the corrupt humour of the Rabble, that oftentimes dearly love to hear their Governours talk't against, and disgrac'd; and they whose own personal knowledge, furnisheth them with matter and ground for reproof, without taking up with the slanders, and groundless surmises of the Malicious, or common rumours of idle and impudent tatlers and railers; those, I say, who have these advantages, are deeply engaged to improve the same, in doing their utmost to discover to them their particular sins, with all the aggravations of them; and to press them upon those Duties, which are so necessary for their own, and the Kingdoms Welfare. If this be the effect of greatness, to be secured from all faithful and serious Reproofs, and Counsel, and to be betray'd by base Flatterers, and forbid low-spirited Temporizers, it is as great an unhappiness as can befall the Sons of men. To have leave to be sick, and not told of it till it's past Remedy; to have leave to stab ones self, and no one must dare to hold our hands, are no very desirable privileges: And to be suffered to post on to everlasting burnings, without being told plainly whither we are going, is, I think, as little for our profit, as either of those, If any be of another mind, as loth to be tormented before their time, I earnestly pray God their experience give not them too full conviction.

That which I intend under this Head, is the negligence of those who are entrusted with the administration of Justice. When I speak most softly, I cannot but say what is very notorious, That they are sadly guilty of a connivance at such gross Prophaneness, as is punishable by the Laws of the Land. Alas! they have got their distinct capacities; they are Gentlemen, as well as Justices; and these it seems are inconsistent one with the other. That which Religion, their Oath, their Fidelity to God, their Prince, and Countrey engage them to; is contradicted forsooth by the Gentility they bear about them, which forbids all moroseness and severity, especially to their Companions, who are as deeply guilty of Debaucheries, as the vilest and poorest Wretches of the Nation. And indeed can they with any Modesty,

desty, or pretence of Reason take notice of, or be severe against those Vices, which their own Examples encourage even Inferiours, much more their Gentlemen-good-fellows too? Whether this be a Forgery or Slander, I appeal to the Experience of the respective Counties where they reside. I intend not the Innocent in this accusation; wherefore none but the Guilty have Reason to be angry, and they as little as any. Why should an honest Citizen be displeas'd, to hear another say, *There are many Knaves in the City?* But if it be grievous to them to hear of their faults, their Drunkenness, Swearing, and such like Loosness, let them think what it is to commit them. How loudly did God cry, *Who will rise up for me against the evil doers?* Or, *Who will stand up for me against the workers of Iniquity?* And because none would hearken, *God himself hath brought upon men their own iniquity, and cut them off in their wickedness*, Psal. 94. 16, 23. Had our Justices, and all Magistrates, been as careful to prevent the Contagion of Sin in themselves, their Families and Jurisdictions, as they are to hinder the spreading of the Infection, this latter Labour might happily have been spared them.

And now I am speaking of Rulers, and Men of Place and Honour, here give me leave sadly to lament it, *That the Nobility and Gentry of our Land, the Major part of them, are arrived to such an height of Prophaneness, that they, as being by their Advancements more Conspicuous than others, are most Infamous for the several Vices we have mentioned.* Oh where are the hop'd for fruits of those Sufferings many of them have past through? Do they not demean themselves, as if they were delivered to do all these Abominations? Are they not too like that King *Ahaz*, who being afflicted, *grew worse and worse*? Have they taken such a prejudice against the Word, Reformation, that they hate the very thing too, and the least appearance of it? What do they recoil with greater eagerness to their vicious courses, as having been under a restraint for a while? Are they resolved not to be behind-hand in sin for all that? Or do they think to revenge themselves of God for the afflictions they have lain under? Or did they think themselves now so secure, that without all danger they might provoke the most High God? Why, you poor impudent Worms, do you know whom you have reproached? Against whom you have exalted your voice, and lift up your eyes on high? even against the *Holy One of Israel*. Why, you Sottish Sons of *Belial*, did you think a title or place of Honour would dispense with you, for your Rebellions against the Almighty Ruler of the World? Who hath stood by you, and observed all your contempt of Him, and his Laws, and hath hitherto spared you out of Pity, not Fear. What, because you could proudly insult and domineer over your Fellow-creatures, did you think

think to Out-brave God himself? What, did you think a Feather in your Caps, or a Ruffling Suit, for which Fools look at you with so much Reverence, would procure his Respect? Did you think he would be more tender of your Delicacies, than to Treat you so roughly, as he doth inferiour Sinners? Did you imagine, when he sent his Messengers to seize you, when he should Commission either Death or the Devil to lay hold on you, that you should fright them away with Swearing and Banning, and Damming? Or with your Swords and Pistols, as you were wont to serve the Serjeants that came to Arrest you? Did you imagine you had made an agreement with Death and Hell, that they should never swallow you up? Or that your Submissions to the Devil had made him so much your Friend, that he would not hurt you? At length I beseech you, be convinc't of your mistakes, and humbled for your folly; and be perswaded to believe, *That the strictest Holinesse is no dishonour to your Greatnesse, nor think that your Interest, which contradicts it.* Oh be not so monstrously vile, to abuse Gods bounty, so as to make it but an help to your sinning against him with more freedom and constancy. Make not your Estates snares to your Souls, by mispending them only in gratifying your Lusts, Appetite and Pride; but improve them for the Honour, and according to the intention of the Donor, that they may not become such an accursed portion to you, that at length you should hear the cutting answer, given to one of your Predecessors, *In thy Life-time thou didst receive thy good things.*

Nor let any of our Great Ones please themselves with a conceit, That they are not the Persons eminently instrumental in bringing down Judgments upon us, because as yet they are freest from the same, as having the conveniencies of removing themselves from that stroke which lights most upon the Meaner Sort; for we may frequently find in Scripture, That the sins of the Great Ones have brought Sufferings upon the Commonalty, who also in their place and measure have been as wicked as others. And withall, let them not be too confident, till they are past all danger, till their Harness is put of, or rather, till God hath laid down his Sword. If these Judgments reach them not, God hath yet more in store for the obstinate, and if they escape all here, yet if at length they are cast into the Lake that burns with fire and brimstone, they'l have little cause for boasting. Since then our Great Men, like those, *Jer.* 5. 5. *Though they have known the way of the Lord yet have altogether broken the Yoke, and burst the Bonds*: My prayer is, that they may not do as those, *v.* 3. *Who when they were stricken, did not grieve, but refused to receive correction, and made their faces harder than a flint, and refused to return*, lest God execute on them those threatnings you may read at large, *ver.* 6. *Oh that they may receive instruction in time, be-*

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fore they feel that iron rod, which will dash in pieces all it lights on, and comes no law to teach them any thing but what will aggravate their torment.

11. I am verily perswaded, had this *Plague* befal'n us Three or Fourscore Years ago, and had Popery been as rife then, as now it is with us, this would not have been accounted one of the least procuring causes, by the most sober Divines of the Nation; except this be grown a more innocent thing than formerly, and the Idolatry of it distinguish't away by latter wits; or else Idolatry be grown less offensive to God, than heretofore; we may take the boldness to say, *That the Licence its Professors have had, or have taken to exercise the same, is one of the Abominations of our Land, provoking to a God jealous of his Worship.* Reason of State, is an Abyss which it becomes not short-sighted Subjects to pry into; but if the pretence of this induce any thing contrary to the interest of Religion, he that hath imbib'd but the very principles of Christianity, may confidently pronounce the deepest Politicians that advise it, *Stark Fools.* The resolution and constancy of pious Prince *Edward*, *England's Josiah*, in denying Liberty for Mass to his Sister *Mary*, was in those Times accounted singular Piety, even by those Bishops who came to request it. 'Tis somewhat strange, methinks, to see even the poor Quakers themselves drag'd to Prisons, and banish'd the Land; whilst Conventicles more expressly contrary to the Law of God, and equally, I think, to the Law of the Land, are (at least) overlook't. Yea, let me add, this freedom they enjoy, whilst half a dozen of private Christians, in all things so far as concerns Lay-men, conformable to the Church of *England*, cannot have liberty to meet together for the private service of God; though it were but to join their prayers on the behalf of our Land, that it would please God to remove from off us the heavy Judgments we now lie under. Could there be no provision made against Seditious Meetings, without such Restraints as these? Nay, and if they take this liberty by stealth, how much more secure are twice as many Drunkards in a Tavern, met at one of their Conventicles of Good-fellowship? So that the more Politick, have found a Tavern the safest place for a Meeting. And doth not this abundantly evince, how much the humours and private inclinations of men, oversway and prevail in their administrations by the same Laws? If therefore the spirit of the Times, and the inclination of inferiour Magistrates, lay as much against Prophaneness, as what they call Phanaticism; that would have no more immunity than this. Let none be offended at my liberty of speech, since doubtless these are things that need a Reformation; I hope 'tis allowable to say so, yea, and necessary too.

And as for Popery, though I involve not the Magistrate in the guilt of all that Liberty they assume to themselves; yet I hope we may have free leave

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to lay guilt upon it, and to charge a most intolerable impudence upon the Professors, and numerous Abettors of it. How many, both openly and closely, are hard at work for the propagation of that, which is much more hurtful, though not so spreading as the Contagion now amongst us? And that it is not so spreading, we owe not so much to their want of will, or pains; but to the goodness of God, the illness of their Cause, and the better temper of our Clime fortified with the Truth. But surely it would well deserve the care of those in Power, to do somewhat more, to keep the healthful from the sick; and to order that there might not be so much licence given for people to frequent those places, where 'tis not impossible but some may be infected; even such, whose Sense chooseth their Religion; who would have their Devotion, like their Recreations; and a Chappel, like a Play-house: And I wish too many of our Gallants be not of this dispositi-on; but as for others, I would have them go to a Mass to be confirmed against Popery. It is very notorious, what freedom they take for their meet-ings in many places in the Countrey, as well as City, besides those that may be priviledged: And certainly *England* is not like to fare the better, for being the Stage whereon so much pious Pageantry, and Histrionical Worship is acted. Had *Dagon* been carried about amongst the *Israelites*, with as much Reverence, as the Ark was amongst the *Philistins* with Rudeness; 'tis likely, That had been attended with as great *Plagues*, as was This. He that considers what Idolatry often brought upon the *Jews*; and shall well con-template the Popish Devotions, and our present Miseries; may not more clearly discern our punishment like to theirs, than a like probable cause of it; and look upon us little more beholden to *Rome*, than they were to *Baal Peor*. If these meek Innocents (who with much ado bring themselves to talk a little humbly, when instead of Fire and Faggot, they are forc't to ar-gue with words) should Retort, that we deal as unjustly with them, as the Heathens did with the Primitive Christians, who imputed to them whatever mischiefs befell the Empire; I shall be brought to think so too, if they can as easily evade the charge of worshipping Angels, Saints, Bread, Altars, Crucifixes and Images; as those first Christians could free themselves from the palpably false Objections made against them: but in the mean time I cannot be perswaded, but that God is highly provok't with all those mock-eries of Worship which they have devised, and in the midst of us solem-nized. And even for these Inventions, may the *Plague* be broke in upon us.

12. We may well account amongst our provoking Sins, the sad and la-mentable Divisions that have been, and still are on foot amongst us: And whoever have raised and kep't up these, have had not the least influence to procure Wrath upon us. Well may that People be divided from God,

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separated from his love, who are so divided one amongst another. When one part of the Nation hath suffered, then still the other hath rejoic'd in their Brethrens Miseries, are contributing to the advancment of their Cause. And successively, what the Sufferers call Tyranny, Cruelty, and Persecution, those that inflict it, call it a just punishment for their malignity or obstinacy. Oh how just is it then, That a general punishment should at length, work us into a more general Compassion? That at least, we may pity each other, when we are all in the same Misery, that appears to have nothing of a Party in it, but strikes down on all sides those that stand before it? Many and great Factions in the Western Church, did immediately precede its being over-run by the *Goths* and *Vandals*, and not only in this, but all other Corruptions are we like to them, as may be learn'd from the Writers of those days; God of his infinite mercy avert the further Judgments which such Disorders presage. Such is, and long hath been our Case, That the loudest and most earnest entreaties for Peace, have been drowned with the contrary noise and clamour of the Contentious. What comes from the weaker and oppressed Party, is still rejected as murmuring and complaining; And those that are in Prosperity, reject the offers which after they would gladly condescend to. Still the side that rules, when they find they can secure their Interests without any compliance, partly, out of a jealousie of being undermined; partly, out of a love to have the preheminence; and partly, out of a desire of revenge, are far from hearkning to the most reasonable motions for Unity and Peace. And he that mentions, or laments our Divisions with never so Catholick and impartial a spirit and design, if he charge not all the blame upon one Party, shall scarce receive any thanks from either. If he cryes out of nothing but Antichristianism, Idolatry, Superstition, and Tyranny, then he shall be hugg'd by some; And if he inveigh bitterly against Schism, Sedition, Faction, Hypocrisie, and charge this upon all that are not just of the humour of the times they live in, then he shall please others. But if he say, some are too imperious and imposing, and others too peevish, impatient, and quarrelsom; and both too guilty of censoriousness and devotedness to their own customs or opinions; he shall hardly be grateful to either; but only to the true Sons of Peace amongst all, who are endued with the sweet and genuine temper of Christianity.

Oh unhappy *England*! How long hast thou been tost to and fro by the hands of Violence and Contention? How oft hast thou been bent this way, and that into contrary extreams? Oh, when at length wilt thou be set strait, and obtain a quiet rest? Oh that this might be the happy effect of Gods heavy hand now upon us! We, and our Posterity then would have

cause to say, Oh happy Plague that befell us in 1665. which discovered to the Inhabitants of *England* this Plague of their own hearts, their uncharitableness and animosities one against another, and cur'd them hereof, and reconciled them into a blessed lasting Peace. To this wish of mine, Let every Reader say *Amen*, even So be it.

Oh what is become of that humble, patient, self-denying, loving Spirit, which was once the Character of the Followers and Friends of our gracious, tender-hearted, and compassionate Lord Jesus. Strange, that ever the Gospel of Peace should furnish the Corruptions of men with matters for Strife! When one great, yea, very great Design of it, is, to promote the truest, and most solid, and universal Peace amongst the Sons of men; which is the natural Consequent of their being at peace with God, through the great Reconciler. And yet what would we have? There's scarce a man but speaks for peace, and vehemently declaims against Dissentions. Few there are but wonder there should be any Differences in the World, and that men are not all of one mind. But what mind must that be? Even their own. And this, this is our mischief: the World is full of such Magisterial Spirits, that they, forsooth, would be Dictatours in the Church. And though themselves may be always wavering, and crookned by a Devotion for a Party; yet would they be the Centre where all various apprehensions should meet, their Opinions and Wills must be the Rule and Standard of Truth and Duty. Though men be never so much blinded by Prejudice or Self-conceit, yet they take it ill, if others will not see with their eyes, blindfold themselves, and take them for our Guides. Now in our Nation, One man wonders what is in the mind of some, that they are faln so much in love with some inconsiderable things, that they rigorously exact from all others an observance of them; And these wonder there should be any found to scruple at them: But its well, if either remember their own ignorance, weakness, and liableness to mistake, which might move them both to a more charitable construction of their Brethrens actions. The overtures for agreement, which come from the weaker, are sometimes disgrac'd by those of their own way (the Zealots of them) as proceeding from Cowardice and temporizing, and most frequently snuffe at by the Party that hath got the upper hand, as fancy and impertinent; The condescentions of those that are in power, are usually little more than to will and command; yes it may be, entreat all that dissent from them to a through-compliance, and then they'l account them humble and peaceable; but scarce otherwise, be their demands never so large and unreasonable. And if any true Lover of Charity, not of the name, but thing, shall propose a way for the reconciling of differences, hee's look't awry at, especially

ly by the higher side, and becomes less capable of preferment (except as a means to corrupt him) as being not thorowly Baptized into their Party.

Thus have we got one for *Paul*, and another for *Apollo*, nay, worse distinguishing names than these; and whil'st both sides are too guilty of inveighing against each other for not coming over wholly to them, how little is done toward a Mid-way meeting? Who formerly have been, and who now especially are to blame in the Land for keeping open our breaches, is not very difficult impartially to discover: But still it so falls out, that they who are most in fault, may least safely be told so; for this must needs be acknowledged, *That they who have opportunity and power of making a very fair and satisfactory Accommodation betwixt those that differ and yet do it not: so far as this neglect comes to, are the persons guilty of continuing our divisions. They who had formerly this opportunity, and neglected it, were in their time guilty; and by consequence they who now enjoy the same advantages, and yet improve them not, must needs fall under the same charge.* I think that man undertakes a very hard task, whose confin'd affections, and zeal for his particular Opinions, shall engage him to defend all that is done, by the Retainers to the way which he himself hath embrac't: For my part I should think it a piece of difficulty to maintain, that even our first Reformers from the Romish Superstitions, were none of them acted by private Aims, and Secular Interest, or miscarried in no circumstance of managing Affairs, though the main cause was most just and honourable. Let who list then for me, enter into a defence of this side or that, not only for these Twenty, but Hundred and Twenty Years; for so long a date do some of our unhappy differences bear: And many will confidently aver, *That a Puritan is of as ancient standing, as an English Protestant; and was once thought best worthy of that Name; and that a Non-conformist was found, as soon as there appeared a Martyr for the Reformed Cause:* Nor yet am I willing to look so far back, as to give any impertinent rehearsal of all the disorders that did precede or cause, accompany or immediately follow upon the more open and violent contentions which have been amongst us, which might tend rather to exasperate all, than profit any, for doubtless such miscarriages have been of all sides (let partial Historians, this way or that, say what they will) that hearty Repentance, and mutual Forgiveness, is more becoming all, than Self-justification, and Spleenish Recriminations; if there be any yet guilty of so much pride and uncharitableness. I heartily pray, that all who have so long surviv'd their Crimes, may be deeply humbled for their setting our Nation on a flame (which all the blood that was spilt have not yet quench't) for the Scandal they have brought upon the Protestant cause, for all their breach of Oaths, Vows and Covenants, prostituting their Consciences, and

pretending Religion for carrying on their corrupt designs, and wilful letting slip the opportunities they had, for the promoting the cause of Christ, and establishing a setled Peace in the Churches; for the gaining of which, some excellent Spirits did so earnestly (though too unsuccessfully) labour. But oh is it not strange and sad, that after we have so long seen and smarted under the deplorable effects of discord, we should yet be as far from embracing the necessary means of Reconciliation as ever! That after a Civil Peace hath been graciously restored, the Church should still be so much divided? And this after diverse moderate persons of different perswasions, have so plainly laid down the methods for such an agreement, as might have made us a Church glorious to all the World; yea, for those things which are the true glory of a Church, which would have made us also happy in the approbation and favour of the God of Peace and Holiness. The Lord open the eyes, and soften the hearts of all, at length to discern and accept of some such Proposals for Peace, that the Progress of our Feuds make us not a Spectacle of Pity to our Friends, and Laughter to our Adversaries, as they have already made us Objects of Gods Indignation. It is not my business now to prescribe these ways, which if I were to do, I should only take the boldness to present Transcriptions; and something I may have occasion to say of this under another Head, to which I hasten: Only in General let me add, This is a certain Truth, approved by the joint Suffrages of the most Sober and Judicious Divines, *That whilest our Peace is laid upon the practice and approbation of things in their own Nature, to the most Learned and Conscientious, doubtful and disputable, it is never like to be firm and Universal: And they who would build Unity upon an Uniformity in those matters which will never bear the stress of it, such as we before mentioned, they are the persons that lay the surest grounds imaginable for the hatching of Schisms, wherein, though they who take this occasion, may be also culpable, yet will not this excuse those who administred it. Wherefore 'tis not by Names or Numbers, or Power, you must make a judgment, when you seek for Schismaticks, no more than you would, if looking for Catholicks, enquire only who call'd themselves so.* To evince my Assertions, who that hath not lost his common reason, or else is becom'n a Papist, but may discern, how impossible it is that ever a stable Concord in the Christian World, should be founded upon the acknowledgment of the Universal Headship of the Bishop of *Rome*? And 'tis not all their Councels and Father they can make such false brags of, nor the diffusiveness of this gangrene of their perswasion, nor the favour of so many Princes, nor the Harmony they would make us believe is amongst themselves, can excuse them from the just imputation of being most notorious Schismaticks and Dividers of the Church, and a manifest Combination of Sectaries.

Once

Once more let me add, *All those who have espoused any private Interest or Party, which they are resolved to profess and maintain at that rate, that no man shall have liberty to promote Christianity it self, except he will jointly contribute to the advancement of that their design and way; are like to perpetuate our dissentions, so long as either there are other men of corrupt minds, who have got a Faction contrary to theirs; or so long as there are to be found men of truly Catholick Spirits and Principles, that will serve the humours of no man, nor abet this or that party, as distinct from all other pious, sober, and peaceable Professors of the Christian Faith; but are resolved to be of that Sect only, which in St. Paul's dayes was every where spoken against.*

I know there are many that are earnest for Peace, often times meaning no more by it, than a stricter Combination of all of their own Party, or some a little different, against one they account a Common Enemy: Thus no doubt the Romanist may be griev'd to consider the struglings in his Mothers own bowels, and may passionately exhort the several Contenders to an Unity, for the more effectual advancement of the Catholick Faction, and joint opposition of the Reformed Churches. But alas, what narrow-spiritedness is this! The Peace therefore I am exhorting to, and which it beseems all true Followers of the Prince of Peace to endeavour after, should be built upon such foundations, as may make it extend to, and be comprehensive of all that agree in the Essentials of Religion, the belief and practice of those things that are revealed in Scripture, as necessary to Salvation; and they ought to keep up no other difference betwixt themselves, and any that own the Christian Name, and the Articles of its Faith, Papists themselves not excepted, besides what the rejection of all Innovations in Doctrine, Discipline or Worship will unavoidably produce. And therefore to be so much of a Negative Religion, as Papists tell us we are, denying this or that groundless opinion, refusing such and such needless practises, is a truer sign of a Catholick, than imposing any one of those controverted things. Our best Disputants against the Church of *Rome*, tell us, *That the foundations of the Churches Essence agreed on, and consented to, are alone the immutable grounds of its Unity.* And I suppose it may be founded upon this reason, *viz.* That when a man enters into any Society for some advantages there to be had, he is like to be firmly engaged thereto, whil'st the condition of his continuance in it, is an acknowledgment and practice of those things only, that are necessary for every particular Member to do, if he would partake of those benefits that are attainable in Common in that Society; for every mans personal interest engages him to an agreement thus far. But when any thing is super-induc't, that is, consulted only for the gratifying or advancing some few, it cannot be expected that there should be a

general

general compliance in these things. Now the Church being an Aggregata of persons, believing and practising all things that God hath proposed and enjoined, in order to their everlasting happiness; what more can be thought necessary for their Union, than their Conjunction, in the acknowledgment and practise of these things? Good God! how clear, methinks, is this Truth! And if this be the way for an Union in the Catholick Church, why not in the particular Churches that are parts of it? For when these narrow and limit the conditions of Church-membership, they so far depart from Catholick Unity. But these things are fully spoken to by others. So then, what miscarriages we are guilty of in this particular, is fully evident; and what is to be done for their redress, is no way difficult to be found out and accomplish't, if at length we were agreed to make Christs interest ours, and wholly to try our selves, and improve our power, and enact laws only to promote that, and to enforce the Laws he hath already made, and would but bring out acknowledgments of Scripture-sufficiency into practice.

The Lord grant this may be the resolution and endeavour of all in this Church and State, who, under God, are in a capacity of restoring Health and Tranquility to a people so sorely weakned, by their being crumbled into so many Sects and Parties; that at length becoming one in Holiness and Love, and turning as one man to the Lord, serving him in a pure Language with joint consent, he may be one with us; and the unity of our prayers may help on to their Success, even the removal of those Judgments, that were inflicted to drive us to such an Unity.

That I may now, Lastly, Sum up much in one word, *We have been a People guilty of as wilful and malicious contempt of God, his Gospel, Ministers and People, and neglect of all true Religion, as ever any Nation of the World was, that hath enjoyed the means and opportunities for, and lain under the engagements to Reformation that we have done.* How have we trampled our mercies in the dirt, or thrown them in the face of the Giver? How soon have we forgot his Rod, when we have been but just from under the smart of it? How have we contemn'd the Threatnings of further wrath denounc't against us by his Word and Ministers? How hath even profest Atheism abounded, that hath made a scorn of, not only the Duties, but Doctrines of Christianity? To renounce all Religion, was to be taken for a Wit: And by their long impunity in wicked courses, were men more confirmed in their Atheistical conceits. Was it not fit then that Death should reduce them to their right mind, when they are so wilfully distracted? But especially for practical Atheists, who whil'st they profess to know God, glorify him not as God, but in works deny and dishonour him; how do they

abound

abound in our Land! Except but some Formalities of external Performance, and publick Worship, and a meer Opinion; How little appearance is there of a Church, or Christianity amongst us? Seem we not rather a Cage of unclean Birds? Look into the Court and University, the City and Country, all sorts and conditions of men; and say then, whether are we not overflowed with profaneness, which its just should be followed with a deluge of wrath to wash it away? To what a pass are we come, amongst whom nothing is so strange as serious Holiness and strict Walking? To be a diligent Server of the most holy God, is made a matter of reproach, i. To live up to the Principles of that Religion, we all pretend to, is to expose ones self at the least, to scoffs and jears. All that is past jesting in Religion, is accounted Fancy and Hypocrisie. Serious Discourse is but fantastical Canting. To mention any word of Christ or his Apostles, without making a jest of it, or the sacred Name of God, except in an Oath, or to take it in vain, is an offence to many tender ears. To admonish and reprove a Drunkard or a Swearer, is to become a Busie-body, and self-conceited. To speak of God, or Christ, Death, Judgment, and Eternity, and the great Matters of Religion, is the way to have some disgraceful Title or other presently put upon you. Godliness it self is look't on but as a faction, and as such despis'd and revil'd; and the most unblameable Professors of it, stigmatized with such names, as being designed for their disgrace, too plainly shew what is their fault, even Purity, and precise, circumspect Walking. Now may we justly revive the complaints made by Godly Bishops and Ministers in former times, That let Men walk never so conformably to the Law of Church and State, only endeavouring to avoid the Sins of the times, and in their Place and Calling to bear witness against them, endeavouring to live convincing, exemplary Lives, and to promote Godliness in their own Families, and amongst their Neighbours, presently they shall be called Puritans (for that was, in *Bolton's* phrase, the honourable Nickname of Christianity in those days) and consequently, have less favour then a Papist, or carnal Gospeller. The most powerful and awakening Preaching, and serious, affectionate Praying, where it is to be had in publick; are disgraced by the name of Popular things, and such Ministers the less favour'd, because flock't after. And here is the Fruit of the Afflictions that have so long lain on us, even for such Sins as these!

Oh how justly may God take up against us all, those Complaints that we find in his Prophets, he doth against the *Jews*? He hath sent his Messengers early and late, giving us Precept upon Precept, Line upon Line; calling to us, Oh do not these abominable things; they will be bitterness in the end, and yet we have turned the deaf ear. Nay, when we have pre-

pended

tended to enquire of the Lord our Duty, yet when it hath been revealed to us, we have at least in our Works, said, We will not do all that the Lord hath spoken, but we will walk after the ways of our own hearts; we will never live such strict and godly Lives; this is more ado than needs; there is no such danger in following our Lusts; this is but the device of Preachers to terrifie us. It was well enough with us, when we lived in those sins they keep such a stir against; and we never had good World, since so much Preaching and Godliness came up. How have we mock'd God by our pretences to serve him, when our hearts have been far from him? And those very Persons, who in the Church were confessing their sins, and praying, that they might live a godly and sober life; when their Devotions are ended, will do little less than deride Godliness, and run into all excess of riot, and wonder at them as precise fools, who run not with them. And all this must be solved by crying, *The Temple of the Lord, The Temple of the Lord*; The Church, The Church; by being zealous of some Ceremony or Custome of little Concernment, and railing at all that are not of their humour, as disobedient, factious, and Phanatical. How is the Service of God dwindled to a meer Formality, and many understand no more by it, than a devout using some particular Form or Mode of Prayers, and by this they think to purchase Heaven sure enough, and make amends for all their neglect of Personal and Family-duties, for the Earthliness of their hearts, for the Vitiousness and Disorder of their Lives? Oh how have Fools made a mock of sin, and look't on it as a trifling thing, that men need not to be so shy of. How many pretty pleas and Excuses have they got for Whoredom, Drunkenness, and the most monstrous Pride? If the plainest Word of God contradict their Lusts, it shall be of no value with them; some trick or other they'l have to evade it; or, if they have nothing to say, yet they will set their wills against Gods Commands, and flatly disobey them. Have not we even wish't there was never a Bible in the World, no God in Heaven, and lived as if indeed there was not? And alas, how small a Remnant is there that have escaped the common Polutions? How few that have been deeply affected with the dishonours done to their Heavenly Father? Who have stood on the Lords side, and been faithful to the cause of Holiness, these have been but as the gleaning of the Vintage, as after the gathering of the Summer-fruits, here and there one in a Town; and these (even as the Remnant of the Faithful amongst the *Israelites*) have been the wonder and scorn of the rest. These have been the Song of Drunkards; and they, together with that Word they walk by, have been the sport of those whose hearts have been merry, as *Samson* was to the *Philistine* Lords. They and their Scripture serve the profane

Gallant to shew his Wit, and help the poor Poet to Matter for his Play. These for the most part are looked at as the most pernicious to the places where they live. And upon them Malice hath its narrowest eye. He that departs from Evil, makes himself a Prey; they have hated, and put to silence him that hath reproved in the City; and abhorred him that spake uprightly; and, after all, wiped their mouths, and said, Let the Lord be glorified. Were not we arriv'd to a most doleful state, when the most exact obedience to the Laws of God, was accounted more disgraceful, than the most open violation of them; and few durst plead for, and practise Holiness with that confidence, that others durst commit, and own known Sins? How hath God waited long, and made the Power of his Long-suffering to appear, striving with us in the ways of Love, and mingling Corrections with his Mercies, that he might prevail with us to pity our selves, but all in vain? He punish'd us with the Sword, and kept us long in the Furnace, and are we com'n out less refined? Again, he tried us with mercies, but we improved them not. He hath threatned, when he might have destroyed; and born with us long to prevent our ruine, and yet nothing would work: But we have prest him with our iniquities, and even made him to serve with our sins; we have grieved his Spirit by our stubbornes and rebellion, and have began to think, because he kept silence, he was such one as we, and liked well enough of our ways; and, because his Judgments were not speedily executed, our hearts have been fully set to do evil. And when we were come to this pass, and God was even weary with withholding, & there were so few to stand in the gap, to turn away his wrath, and even of them, many in a great measure thrust out of it, were we not ripe for destruction? Was not our Ephah full? Is it then any wonder, if at length, God be risen to plead with us, in a manner that shall make us know and feel, that he ruleth in the world, who will by no means acquit the impenitent? who, though he bear long, yet will not always bear with a stiff-necked Generation. Could we expect any other, than that God should make bare his Arm, and visit us for these things, and ease himself of his Adversaries, and avenge himself of such obstinate Contemners of his Laws and Authority? And what, *Shall the Lion roar, and not the Beasts of the Forrest tremble*? Is God angry, and shall not we fear? Doth he shake his Rod over us, nay, lay it upon us, so that thousands feel it in their flesh, and all hear the sound of its terrible lashes; and yet do we not tremble? Shall not our haughty countenances change, and the joynts of our loins be loosed, now there is an Invisible hand come forth, writing such bitter things against us? Hath God such a sore Controversie with us? Hath he done so much, and will he yet do these and these things against us, and wilt thou not yet prepare to meet thy God,

Oh *England*? Oh the dreadful senſleſneſs and ſtupidity of the hearts of our People! How few are yet careful to learn Righteouſneſs, by the Judgments that are amongſt us! Notwithſtanding this day of Adverſity, how few will be brought to Conſider? Is not this a direful preſage of farther Wrath? And that it is even an utter deſtruction that is coming upon us! Oh what a ſpirit of ſlumber and ſottiſhneſs hath poſſeſt the moſt! If it is not ſo with thoſe about thee, Reader, thou dwelleſt in a happy place. Though people hear of Thouſands dying about them, and have daily reaſon to expect their turn ſhould be the next, yet how regardleſs do they appear of all due preparations for it, as ever? They flatter themſelves with a conceit, that yet they may eſcape, and that Death ſhall not come nigh their Dwellings, and ſo poſt off all thoughts of it, taken up with the very ſame buſineſſes, deſigns and pleaſures, they were always wont.

But what ſhould we ſay, can Sword, or Famine, or Plague, or any outward Affliction, work on them, who have been nothing bettered, but rather hardned by Commands, Promiſes and Threatnings? Can the Rod plead with, and importune them, ſo as the Word hath done? Will Sickneſs inform, command, argue and beſeech ſo affectionately as the Miniſter was wont? Where *Moſes* and the Prophets might not be heard, what can prevail? *If hewing them with the Prophets, and ſlaying them with the words of his mouth, would not affect them*, *Hoſ.* 6. 5. Shall the Execution of his Judgments bring light? Why yes, no doubt, God hath his Chaſtiſements which ſetting on, and enforcing his Word, do often humble and reform Souls, and he hath alſo thoſe Puniſhments by which he Deſtroys. And if men will ſtrive againſt his Spirit, and reſiſt its workings; ſhut their eyes againſt the light, contemn Inſtruction, yea, harden themſelves under Correction; and rather hate the God who makes them ſmart, than the ſins that procure it, like thoſe in *Rev.* 16. who blaſphemed God when they were in anguiſh; what can be expected, but the final ruine of the people or perſons that are guilty of ſuch Stubbornneſſe and Impenitency? And oh that this were not the caſe of multitudes amongſt us! The Lord awaken thoſe that are yet in a capacity, to a timely prevention of ſuch a doleful miſery. And thus I have given an account of thoſe Crying Sins that are to be found amongſt us, which belong to the firſt Branch, which comprehended under it, thoſe Sins that were more evident and notorious. And by this we have made way for the Second, To diſcover ſome ſuch Miſcarriages, which may be leſs evident, but no leſs hainous than theſe, as being indeed in a great meaſure productive of them, and therefore I thought it methodical enough, to proceed from the ſenſible effects, to the ſomewhat more latent Cauſe.

All

All that I shall speak of the latter Branch, I shall reduce to this one Head, namely, That it may very justly be presumed, to have a great influence in the procuring our Miseries, that so many able Ministers of Christ have of late been silent, and in a manner useless, compared to what they might have been, had they continued their publick Employments.

Thus far I hope none will be offended; for if it be granted *de facto*, that there are many whom God had furnished with abilities to serve him in the Ministry, which he had called them to, that have not exercised these abilities to the best advantage in that Function, (and I think he must have a good stock of Impudence who shall deny, that many of those who have been of late unserviceable, were so accomplisht) then I shall easily evidence, That hereby God hath been much dishonoured and provoked, whose soever the fault hath been; which is that I shall briefly enquire into, and discover, and then give in full evidence of my assertion.

I know, it may so happen, that what I write, may displease one and another; but for that I am indifferent, as having resolved to give no allowance to my passion or prejudice, but to use the same impartiality and faithfulness, to the utmost of my power, that I should do, if, so soon as ever I had finished my work, I was to receive my summons to appear before the just Judge of Heaven and Earth. Nor would I willingly speak any thing but what the undoubted Interest of Christ and his Gospel engage me to, and will warrant me in: And whilst I have the Lord engaged in the whole cause which I undertake and plead; I value not a straw at my foot, what the most enraged Potent malice can do. Nay, I dare then bespeak all in the words of the King of *Egypt* to *Josiah*, a little varied; 2 *Chron.* 35. 21. What have I to do with thee, Oh man, whoever thou art? I come not against thee this day, but against Sin, wherewith I have war; for God commanded me to this work. Forbear from medling with God, who is with me, that he destroy thee not. And I think a man may with as much comfort be a Martyr for the Unity and Peace of the Church, and advancement of Holiness, as ever any of our Protestants were, for the defence of the Reformed Religion, (and indeed this was more their Cause, than Christianity it self, if we consider it right) yea, though he have a sheet of paper pinn'd to his back, that shall call him Schismatical and Seditious, and as such he be punished, as they we know were burnt for *Hereticks*. But to the business in hand. As to the matter of Fact, it's well enough known, what Conditions were required of all that would continue in the Ministry, and still are exacted, of all that will enter upon it, which multitudes not submitting to, were Suspended and Silenced, and others, who both by their Parents and themselves, were designed for that Employment, and accord-

ingly educated, were prevented of their intentions. The ill effects hereof I shall speak something to anon.

Now that I may deal fairly and plainly; this I must needs say, That if there have been any of these Dissenters, who were convinced in their Consciences, that the things commanded were such, as all circumstances considered, they might lawfully have submitted to; but yet out of factions, humour, obstinacy, a desire to gratifie, or promote a party, or any such carnal principle, did refuse such submission; they cannot be excused from the guilt of deserting their charges, and of the many ill consequences of that desertion. What can any man in reason desire more? For it is as such they suffer, and not meerly as misinformed, much less sure as invincibly ignorant, or as men that would not sin; and if they have indeed been guilty of the Crimes, for which their punishments are proportioned, I readily joyn with their most forward Accusers; but oh that the Punishment had stayed, till the Crime had been proved, and laid on those that were found guilty?

But on the other hand, if there were any, who did use all probable means for their satisfaction, (being earnestly desired to have continued in the work of the Lord) and after all, remained perswaded, that they could not comply with what was enjoyned them, without wilful sinning against God, then they who by their Impositions did necessitate them to forsake their Ministry, are liable to the former charge, *viz.* are guilty of their Ejection, and of the Effects thereof, except they had sufficient reason for so doing. Would they have any thing spoke more candidly and gently?

Now whether there be any of the former sort, or not, I cannot, nor dare expresly affirm; and I think, till they shall acknowledge, or some other way discover it, (more than I for my part have known them to do) it can be known only to him from whom no secret thoughts are hid; but I desire them to deal faithfully with their own hearts, and if they are conscious to themselves of any such ill Principles, and grounds of their not Conforming to their Rulers Laws, to be humbled for, and expel them.

That there are many such ejected, and prevented from the Ministry, as I described in my latter Supposition, I cannot but believe, as having for my self, their testimony of my own Conscience, in the sight of God; and for others such Professions from men that have done nothing, that I know, to forfeit their credit; and such Reasons to make those Professions appear credible; that I am little less confident of it, than I am that there is such a place at *Rome* or *Paris*, which I know only by hear-say: I say, little less confident of this, that there are many who yield not a Conformity to what was imposed, not out of Hypocrisie or Humour, but out of a fear of displeasing God, and hurting their own Souls.

If

If this then be acknowledged, I think those who have cast and kept such out, have very great cause to be humbled for their severity toward them, according to the measure they were instrumental here: Except (I added) they had sufficient reason for th ir so doing. And that I shall grant they had, if th y manifest either of these two things, which are all the grounds I can imagine.

1. That there are as good effects of this their Ejection, as I can produce ill ones.

2. Or that the nature of the things impos d on them, was such, that it had been of as dreadful consequence to have dispenst with conformity to them, as thus to deal with them for not rendering such a Conformity.

But till either of these be proved, or some other satisfactory reason assigned (giving leave soberly to debat the case) I shall for the conviction, and humiliation of the guilty, mention a very few of the many sad effects of this th ir exclusion.

1. The first is, The unreformedness, and wickedness of multitudes that through Gods blessing upon their endeavours, might have been converted and reformed. And that this might have been in all probability accomplished, we may very reasonably argue, from that eminent successe which God gave to many of their publick labours, and by some fruits, since then, of their private endeavours.

Let none here wilfully mistake, and say, that by converting men, I mean nothing else but to turn them to a party, or an opinion; for I profess I intend no such thing; but the very same that Christ doth, when he tells us, That except we be Converted, we cannot enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; and that the Apostle doth, when he speaks of our being *turned from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God*: Even the turning the bent of mens h arts and lives, from sin and the creature, to God by Jesus Christ, and to the ways of holiness, let them be of what opinion they will, as to the several forms and modes amongst us. Oh how many fewer Drunkards, Swearers, Whoremongers, Oppressors and Cheaters might there have been amongst us, had they had their liberty to have preached down these sins, whose only study and business it was to decry and shame them, and bring men from the love and practise of them? How many more might there have been, who as true mourners in our *Zion*, would have been humbled for their own, and the Nations sins, and laboured by all means to have prevented Gods wrath; had they in all places enjoyed those means for th ir Conversion, which they sometimes did, and might yet have done? If then the multitudes of provoking sinners, and the scarcity of humble, holy, praying Christians, have been any ground of our sufferings, can it be

doubted

doubted whether that which hath been so much the cause of those, hath done any thing to the procuring of these.

Oh! for the Lords sake bethink your selves, all you that are concerned: Was it just and equal dealing, when the Prince of Darkness was advanc'd with all his might into the field, then to disband, and put out of Commission so many experienced Leaders, that in their own Persons, and by encouraging and guiding the several Companies, would have done their best to resist him? Did you herein consult the pleasure of the great Captain of our Salvation, from whom y u own your selves to have received your Offices, only for the successful carrying on of his Designs, and the fighting of his Battels?

Nay, and all this you have done, because they submitted not to some things, which you your selves call Indifferent; and which they believed, were contrary to the former Instructions they had received from their Lord and Master.

Judge in your Consciences, Do you think it is more acceptable to Christ, that the Souls of men, whom he thought worth his precious Hearts-blood, should perish, rather than some Ceremony or Injunction of yours be omitted? Did he ever in his Actions or Doctrine manifest such a contempt of Souls, and such an esteem for a Ceremony? Consider his Life and Death, and read his Discourses to the Pharisees, and then judge. Are Salvation and Damnation indifferent things? And shall they be less regarded than such? Oh how will you compensate for the Disservice y u have already done to the Gospel! It is not all your Revenues can do it, though your Repentance and Reformation of such miscarriages for the future may do much. Be not offended with my freedom of speech: for (God is my Witness) I speak not out of passion, nor a desire to make you odious; but out of a just zeal for the Cause of our deareft Lord, and the Concern of mens immortal Souls. What amends will you ever be able to make to the poor Creatures, who may now be tormented in Hell, for want of those means of prevention which you deprived them of? Though they may have had those other advantages which may leave them inexcusable before God; yet how will you excuse the denying them the best you might have afforded?

You may deride, storm at, or contemn these expostulations of a poor Worm like your selves: but consider, I beseech you, what answer you will make the great Judge of Heaven and Earth, who will come shortly in Glory and Power to plead his own, and his Peoples Cause: when he will regard no man for the pompous Titles he hath had, or great Offices he hath born in his Church (for then, well fare the Pope and his Clergy) but they

they who have done and taught his Commands, let them be of never such diminutive titles and esteem here, shall be accounted Great in his Kingdom. And That, That's our comfort, by his Word we shall be judged at last, if here we may not be tried by it. Then we shall all stand on equal terms, and the arbitrary determinations of frail men shall no more take place, but there abide an Inquisition. To that Bar we appeal, by that judgment let us stand or fall; thither we refer our selves, and if we may not be heard here, we will patiently and chearfully wait that final, just decision of our Cause.

But now hear, for your own sakes at least, if neither our beseechings and tears, nor the cry and blood of souls may be regarded. Do you think this is a slight matter? And that you can easily shift it off, if they be required at your hands? Did Christ die for souls, & shall they escape who murder them? And do they do any less, who hinder those that would run to help and save them? If the silent Watchman be so damnably guilty, what are they that silence the Watchmen? To conclude, Whether it had not been more acceptable to God, more correspondent to your Commission, more beseeming your Places and Profession, more for the advancement of Religion, and the eternal Welfare of Souls; to have continued and encouraged faithful Labourers in the Vineyard of the Lord, whose only delight was, to be employed in his Service; rather than to have offered them such terms, which Christ never bid you, and then exclude them for not accepting those terms. I think, your own Consciences may easily determine now, be sure the Lord of the Vineyard will, shortly.

2. Another Effect of their removal from the Ministry, is, that many Places are left destitute, and many are supplied with negligent, insufficient, scandalous men. Had their rooms been fill'd with others as learned, pious, and industrious as they; yet could they, who cast them forth, hardly evade the former charge, except they could manifest, that the Harvest was not great enough, to have required all their utmost conjunct diligence. But it is beyond all contradiction evident, That in many Places since their removal, there have been no Ministers at all, in some as bad as none, in others worse than none. Let none maliciously interpret my Accusation largelier than I design it, which is not at all of the innocent. I censure no man as a Conformist; but reverence and esteem all those, who by their Lives and Doctrines, have apparently endeavoured to advance Religion; of which number, I am confident, there are many Conformable men. And I abhor that uncharitable, censorious Spirit, which condemns all that are not just of their own Way. But on the other side, I think all are engag'd to be as far from palliating the notorious miscarriages of others. Oh how many titular

titular Ministers have we got, that are far from deserving the name of Christians? That should rather be turned out of the Church, than admitted into the Pulpit? This is so manifest, That sober men, though of their own way, acknowledge and lament it. How many are there, that more effectually preach for the Devil all the Week, than for God upon his Day? whose lives do more to set up Profaneness, than their Sermons to suppress it? Are there not many openly guilty of that Drunkenness, Wantonness, Swearing, and such like Loosenes, which they are appointed to turn others from? And are these wickednesses provoking in the people, and not in their Teachers, who can never be guilty alone? Are any men capable of offering such an affront to God, and doing so much hurt to mens Souls by their wickedness, as they from whose Lives should be learnt what is acceptable to God, and necessary for us? 'tis, I remember, the phrase of an excellent Divine, *A Profane Minister is the Devil in his Pontificalibus.*

I list not here to blaze abroad all the disorders of our Clergy; I shall not insist upon the ignorance and insufficiency of any; though in point of honour they were concerned to have provided against such, who did lately with so much earnestness declaim against making Priests of the lowest of the people. I will not meddle with that Tribe that lives by the Cathedrals. I will not tell of mens oblique Preaching against that holiness which they pretend to preach up. I shall not speak of the Pride and Covetousness, the Laziness and Negligence of Pluralists, Non-residents, and of all those, who too apparently seek their own honour and profit, from the places they enter upon, rather than the Salvation of Souls. These things I shall not dilate upon, because I would not too much swell my Paper, and lest I should be thought to Rail: Only let me beg the guilty to charge these Crimes home on their own Consciences, as men that value their everlasting happiness; for doubtless God is much displeased with the sins of those, whose Callings hath so near a relation to him, and especially with the most heinous sin, of making Religion only as a stirrup, by it to go up into Dignities and Preferments; which they who could see and censure in others, should be careful themselves to avoid. But those I may intend, are the grosly vicious, and debauch't, who are most unworthy to take Gods Name into their mouths, to declare his Covenants or Statutes, who themselves hate to be Reformed. Good Lord! That ever it should come to this in a Christian Church, Reformed from the Corruptions that had overspread Christendom, that infamously loose and dissolute men should be Ordained into, and continued in the Ministry, when godly, sober men are excluded, and kept out! Oh how might the Romanist insult for such an acknowledgment, if the Pope and his Cardinals, with the rest of their *Hierarchy*, were not known all the world over?

over? But with us, such doings are capable of far greater aggravations than with them: Oh that I could speak so sharply, as might displease our Church-governours into a Reformation of this Corruption. What, are Wolves fittest to be Shepherds of the flocks? Can the Devils Vassals destroy his Kingdom? Must stark-mad men be made Physitians, and sent to recover other men to their wits? Must they that have the Plague-sores running upon them, be sent amongst others to prevent their Infection? Is not a Pest-house a fitter place for such a man, than a Pulpit? Are Traytors and Incendiaries, the fittest men to reclaim others from their Rebellion? Are they likely to honour God, and the Gospel, and save mens Souls, who do as it were, by their actions say, *Come, Parishoners follow me; whatever I jest to you in the Church, about God and Christ, Heaven and Hell; these are but idle Dreams, or such matters as you need not much regard; God is an hard Master, his Laws are too strict; it's best to take our pleasures, and satisfie our Lusts, come on it what will; you entered into too strict a Covenant in Baptism, you had better serve the Devil, than this Jesus Christ, who layes such hard things on his Followers; what need you regard his blood, he shed it, that you might have leave to live wickedly; or however, 'tis of no great worth; for you had better be in an Ale-house, or Whore-house, than the Heaven he hath purchas't.* Are not these, think you, sweet Preachers of the Gospel? And let them consider then how well they have discharged their trust, who set them up, and maintain them, whil'st they shut forth those who would make it their whole business, to carry on the very same design which Christ came into the world for. If any should here object, and say, *But these profane men are peaceable, whilst your Godly ones are turbulent and disobedient?* I shall wish him to stay till I come presently to speak a word or two to that; only here let me answer, *It seems strange to me, that those men must pass for peaceable and obedient, who are known Rebels against the Laws of Christ; when they must be accounted disobedient, who had rather lose their lives, than wilfully break one of the least of these his Commands, only because they submit not to Humane Impositions; which yet they would do, did they not think themselves pre-obliged by the Laws of Christ to the contrary.* Is this fair dealing? I put it to thy own Conscience, Reader, be thou who thou wilt, and as partial as thou wilt. And if I went no farther, I suppose I have spoke enough to manifest, that there have been such sad consequences of the ejection of all who Conformed not, that doubtless God hath thereby been dishonoured, and displeased, and for this hath a controversie with our Land.

3. I might moreover add, the feuds and animosities which have hereby been fomented and heightned, and are like to be still perpetuated; whereas, had there been such an abatement of things required, as might well have

been granted, in order to the retaining them in their places; this might have been an happy mean for the compoſure of our greateſt differences, and people could not have taken notice of ſuch diviſions amongſt us, nor could Papiſts have had ſo much reaſon to hit us in the teeth with them; nor could they whoſe ſpirits were too much exaſperated, or judgments corrupted, have had ſo much occaſion to make Factions and Parties, and ſo much ſin had been prevented.

4. Nor yet think it nothing, that ſo many innocent men and their Families, are expoſed to ſuch great neceſſities, that ſome of them have ſcarce had bread and water to keep them alive; and ſome have been glad to betake themſelves to hard Labour, to procure them a Livelihood. Certainly, the very cryes of their Children for bread, ſounding in the ears of a moſt juſt and merciful God, are not diſregarded: And whether they who have reduc't them to theſe exigencies, have obſerved the great Rule, not only of Chriſtianity, but even Nature it ſelf, *To do as they would be done to*, I would wiſh them well to conſider. If any ſhould Retort, *That they themſelves were once ſo dealt with.* I anſwer, *I think they were uſed nothing near ſo harſhly*: But grant they were, the greater was their Injuſtice which was the cauſe; and the more inexcuſable they, who inflict on others the hard meaſure, which they themſelves lately groaned under; and make them their pattern, whom they complain of and condemn. And had it been (as it was not) thoſe perſons who injured them, whom now they cauſe to ſuffer, I wonder where Revenge is made their duty; but this in a Church-man, muſt ſometimes paſs for zeal for the Church.

It was eaſie to inſtance in more effects of this their Ejection, which have been injurious to Religion, and the Souls of men. Hence it's come to paſs, that their endeavours in a private way, by perſonal diſcourſes, or writings, to reclaim ſinners, are much fruſtrated; for they are looked upon as a kind of diſtinct Party, and ſo let them be never ſo careful to inſiſt only on the moſt uncontroverted Truths of Religion, yet will many through prejudice miſunderſtand all they ſay, as if they were pleading their own cauſe, and endeavouring to gain Proſelytes to themſelves, whil'ſt they are only ſtriving to win Souls to Chriſt. When they are preſſing men upon holineſs and diligence for their Salvation, ſome are prone to flatter themſelves with a conceit, That this only is their ſtrict and ſingular Opinion; and all that they ſay or do in Religion, is put upon the ſcore of a Party, as if in theſe things they differed from others, and therefore are they diſregarded. And thus it is alſo as to the People, who are known to love and adhere to them; for their exact walking is look't on but as the following a Sect, and which need not therefore be imitated. And it can hardly be thought how many Souls

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miscarry through these mistakes, which might have been much prevented, by that concord and mutual Love which might have made all have been esteemed as Brethren. Moreover, hence it is, that these being now counted disaffected and discontented persons, many who bore them a Spleen (for their Love 'tis not impossible) meet with pretences to vent it; for they narrowly watch them in all their ways (and a little Love to the Commonwealth, with a Dose of Revenge and Malice, how vigilant will it make men?) and are still ready to accuse them of something or other, they know not what, to bring them into trouble. And if they do but with all peaceableness meet together with their Neighbours and Friends to quicken, comfort, and build up one another in their most holy Faith; yea, if they do but continue those Meetings they were wont to have in times of greatest Liberty; presently they are liable to disturbance and punishment, as men holding unlawful Assemblies; whereas, had no such terms been put upon them, as necessarily put a difference betwixt them and others; they might have been esteemed as Loyal Subjects, as they indeed are, and their actions had not been so obnoxious to groundless censures and accusations, nor they ever hurried to Prison, or forc't some other way to suffer, for nothing but the meer Surmises of the malicious. But I shall not give in more particulars: And whether these things I have mentioned are well-pleasing to God, or whether they may not rather have help't on his Indignation against us, let all that are unbyas't determine.

As to the Truth of what I have spoke, I think it cannot be gain-sayed; and what can be answered, I cannot devise, except what I before hinted, any should say, *That by their removal, the Peace of Church and State is secured, which otherwise had been hazarded.* To which I answer:

1. Might not this Peace have been procured better, by laying it upon those things whereon Christ hath laid the Peace of his Church? And not to make new Laws, to which whil'st men in Conscience cannot give obedience, they must be judged obstinate, as the Courtiers served *Daniel*; Surely this is hard measure, when the things required are, in the judgment of the Imposers, not necessary till they have commanded them, and so might have been left as indifferent, as they are in their own natures, and then how little contention had there been about them.

2. Might these persons be excused from those kind of Subscriptions and Declarations which are commanded them, They are ready to give in all that Security, that can in reason be demanded, *That they will be careful to preserve and promote the Publick Peace.* If their Oaths and Promises may not be thought sufficient to oblige them to this, what hold could be taken of those other Subscriptions and Professions? But if these were intended as a

contriving them in that form and with such expressions as were most likely to be refused, and so fittest to ensnare; if they were design'd to be as a distinguishing *Shibboleth*, that they might know whom to fall upon as a partition wall, to keep off those that may in some punctilio's differ from them; as a Test of a Party, which serves to rank men under several divisions. If any in their Impositions had such like designs as these, is it not all their Power and Policy combin'd, that can make such actings pass for current, with that God who is a Lover of Peace. And at length all shall be convinc't *That they who break the Peace of the Church, to promote the peace of a Party, are not those Peace-makers upon whom a blessing is pronounced.*

3. I would fain know what disturbance of the Peace there was, whil'st the Liberty granted by His MAJESTIES Declaration was enjoyed; and upon what account it was likely to have been more violated, had that Liberty been secured and perpetuated.

4. I am yet to learn how this Restraint that is laid upon them, doth any whit the more incapacitate them for interruption of the Peace, if a sense of their duty laid not a stronger obligation on them. Its evident enough, that many of them have that influence upon their people, that it was no way difficult for them, to lead them into Sects and Separations, if they had a mind to't; and to lay such provoking pressures upon them, was not the way to prevent such miscarriages. But, blessed be God! their patience and moderation hath prevail'd over the smarting sense of those Sufferings, which might have vext them into extreams. If any have discovered too much impatience and bitterness of spirit, as I excuse it not, so neither are those proceedings which caus'd it, any more justifiable: But for many it hath been their care, according to their capacities to heal the distempers of their peoples spirits, to remove the too great prejudices many have conceived, and to reduce all whom they perceived inclined to a Party. So that I dare confidently say, *They have done more to preserve the Peace of the Church, than those who censure them, and cast them out of the Ministry, as Factious, and unpeaceable. And as for raising any Seditions or Commotions in the State, not their most quick-sighted Adversaries have, that I can hear or know, discovered them in the least guilty. And did His MAJESTY but over-hear or know their daily privat'st prayers to God on His behalf, I am confident He would easily be convinc't, That His Kingdome holds not more Loyal, Faithful Subjects, than they, however they may be misrepresented, as deserving all that Severity with which they are Treated.*

By this time, I hope, I may on good grounds conclude, That the laying such Restraints on so many faithful Ministers, who might have been so eminently serviceable to their Master, is one of those provocations of the Divine Majesty, under the effects whereof we groan; and that therefore those who have

have been the Procurers hereof, ought to lament their sin, and do their utmost to redress this grievance and restore that Liberty of which their Brethren have been deprived. And if, when His MAJESTY, out of His Gracious Nature, was inclined to have given that Indulgence, which *Truly tender Consciences* did strongly hope for, and which would have rejoic't the hearts of so many Thousands of His best Subjects; if then there were any who stood in the gap to prevent the same, as we were publickly told (in those very words) there were; let all such now soberly consider, what a breach they have helpt to make upon us, and by their intercession with His MAJESTY, for that Liberty he is so willing to grant, as by one singular means, let them now stand in the gap, and turn away God's overflowing wrath, that we be not utterly consumed.

And to you, *Reverend Fathers*, the Rulers and Guides of our Church, give me leave to reinforce my earnest Request, in the name of our Common Saviour, That as you value his blood, and the purchase of it, and the precious Souls for whom it was shed; you would yield a gracious audience to those, who beg of you nothing but a freedom to publish the glad tydings of Salvation by Christ our Redeemer, to the lost Sons of men. Consider what a reasonable thing it is that is beg'd of you, no Honours or Preferments, but a Liberty to serve your Lord and ours in the work of the Ministry. Look over, I beseech you, your Commission again and again, and see where you are commanded, yea, or allowed to cast out those whom God hath call'd to this work; or keep out those, whom he hath in some measure fitted for, and strongly inclined to it, upon such grounds, for such reason, as we are thus dealt with. Will you thrust and keep such labourers out of the Harvest, whom our Lord hath bid us pray might be sent forth into it? Was your power given you to any other purpose, than Edification? Oh Sirs, what is it you seek? Is it indeed to advance Christs Interest, to save poor Souls from the devouring flames? to set up Holiness, and root out Wickedness? Why then will you remain at distance from your Brethren, whose very hearts are set upon these works; who had rather than all the Riches and Honours in the world, be more in a capacity of imploying themselves successfully herein? Oh, why will you restrain them from speaking, whose very bowels yearn over poor sinners that are just dropping into the burning Lake, and think not where they are? When the faces of so many thousands gather blackness, and they starve and swoon, and fall in the streets; why do you bind the hands of those who would so fain reach them forth the bread of Life? When their miseries and necessities cry aloud for help, why do you hinder those who would gladly afford them a seasonable Supply? Who, though they may employ themselves according to their opportunities with particular mens Souls, yet what's that to the having their Congregations

gregations to speak to? Review your patterns, I beseech you, and see whether you find any carriages of theirs, in their ruling of the Church, which may justifie yours. Our blessed Lord would not have those forbid to do Miracles in his Name who went not with him. Nor doth *Paul* intimate any desire to have silenc't those who Preach't Christ out of envy, much less such (had there been any Pastors of that mind) who were for eating of Herbs only, not meat. He speaks indeed of having the mouths of some stop't, *Tit.* 1. 10. *viz.* They of the Circumcision, who would have obtruded their Mosaick Ceremonies upon the Christians, and judge whether our cause be like theirs; and yet even their mouths were to be stop't by sound doctrine, and evidence of argument, *ver.* 8.

Oh how confident should I be of obtaining that liberty I am begging of you (if Reasons of another sort hindred not) was Christ himself alive amongst us, or any of his Apostles our Governours. Had I the happiness to have lived in St. *Pauls* days, and addrest my self to him with all humility and earnestness, imploring a leave to Preach the Gospel, professing I had no carnal aim in it, but that my soul long'd to be discloseing those mysteries and treasures of Love to poor senseless creatures, that were passing on to damnation, as not knowing or considering what Christ had done to keep them thence, and that I would endeavour faithfully to declare the whole Counsel of the Lord, without adding to, or diminishing ought from it; had I made such an address, do you think in your own Consciences, he would have turned me away without my Errand? I have sometimes thought, that should I have put up such a Petition to the King, I should have prevailed; but fears of becoming ridiculous, have deter'd me.

But let not this my Sute, I beseech you, be rejected; for what pretence of Reason can be alledged against it. It is not I know the things themselves which are required, that you so much stand upon, as if they were in their own Nature necessary antecedently to your Commands. And was ever yet any answer given to those demands which have been made (amongst others) by a person of that judgment and moderation, that you can neither suspect him of prejudice or inclination to a Party, when he asks what Charter Christ hath given the Church to bind men up to more than himself hath done? What grounds there are why Christians should not stand upon the same terms now, which they did in the time of Christ and his Apostles? and whether Christ will ever thank men at the great day, for keeping such out from communion with his Church (we may well add from their service of the Church) whom he will receive into Heaven, and vouchsafe not only Crowns of Glory to, but *Aureola* too, if there be any such things there? He tells you there, that the Commission the Apostles were sent out with,

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was only to teach what Christ had commanded, not the least intimation given of a power to impose any thing else, except what they might be directed to by the immediate guidance of the Spirit of God; and that they made an antecedent necessity, either absolute, or for the present state, the only ground of imposing their commands, and much more to the same purpose; which, however they are regarded, may shew thus much, *That it is not only Humour and Singularity which judges it most reasonable, that those things, which the Defenders of them count Indifferencies, should not be rigorously imposed on others, nor the Peace of the Church suspended upon them.* But is it indeed the Publick Peace that by these things you consult for? Why will you then in the room of a Submission to them, accept of any the most Solemn Engagements from those who will enter into them, that they will not disturb the Peace either of Church or State? And if you find any acting contrarily, proceed against them as you please. Let the World judge what reasonable offers we make. Is it our obedience to Authority you would have us manifest? Why let our Submission in all other things speak for us. Or lay on us what commands you will in Civil things, or in any thing that may be no snare to our Consciences, and by them prove whether we be obstinate or not.

In a word, *Will you accept our Promises, Bonds, Oaths, or what assurance can be desired, That we will labour in all things so act most agreeably to the Gospel of our Lord, which we all own as a sufficient Rule? And that we will not allow our selves in any prejudice, humor or perverseness, but in all things, (though we would not be made one a Rule to another, in matters that will well allow diversity) will comply with you, so far as possibly we can, without danger of displeasing God, and damning of our own Souls?* And surely you have more tenderness than to desire us to do such things. *I am bold thus to speak in other names (though not to be privy to my Work) because I am perswaded there are few but will do thus much, and what can in reason be required more of any?*

Let none usurp the Prerogative of searching hearts, and knowing mens meanings better than themselves, and say, *These are fine words, and specious pretences, but the design of all is, but to get more Liberty to strengthen a Party.* For I solemnly profess, and, Thou God, who standest over me whil'st I am writing these words, know'st it, *I abhor such a design.* If to raise men to the knowledg and love of God through the Spirit of his Son; if to bring them to a careful observance of the precepts of our Lord, that they may be obedient to their Governours Ecclesiastical and Civil; just and charitable to their Brethren; that they may be holy, humble, heavenly, patient, meek, pure, chaste and temperate; abounding in all the graces and fruits of the

Spirit;

Spirit; If this be to make men a Party; then let me be interpreted as earnestly desirous to promote it; otherwise not. And shall those, who have no other aims than these, be kept out of the Ministry, as turbulent, factious, and schismatical? Yea, some that were not Born so soon as our Civil Confusions, and therefore Sided with none, Offended none? If you indeed thought there were any thus innocent, and whose intentions were so upright, would you have no regard to them, but reject all their Petitions, even such as I have made? Surely you would not. Why be assured, if there may any faith be given to men, and if it be possible for men to know their own hearts, there are some, yea, I am confident, many such. Well, however after all we may be censured and slandered, yet, whilest we can daily betake our selves to the All-knowing God, and profess before him; that it is the grief of our souls, that we are deprived of those opportunities of serving him, which we once had or hoped for, which we beg may be restor'd and vouchsaf't rather than any outward advantages whatever; and that we had rather serve him in the Ministry, than (for any interest of our own) be made Monarchs of the World; onely we dare not pretend his Glory to justifie our lie; we dare not (for to him we may speak plainly) say, we consent to those things we cannot find warrant for from his Word; nor that those who have vowed to reform his Church, are not oblig'd by those Vows, when corruptions are so many and great; but we beseech him to lead us into all Truth, and discover to us our duty, for that he knows we would do any thing but Sin against him, to purchase a liberty publickly to serve him; and therefore to his righteous judgment we wholly commit our Cause; whilst I say in our daily prayers to God, we can make such Professions as these (and that some can) we may possess our souls in patience, and be comforted with the Conscience of our Integrity, whatever clamours there are without us, and whatever calumnies men may labour to fasten upon us. And I beseech you, who by your harshness, send such daily to God with tears and groans under their heavy pressures; yea, and Thousands more of the best Christians in the Land on their behalf, and on the behalf of their own souls, in so great a measure deprived of the precious quickning means they once enjoyed; bethink your selves how grateful those your proceedings are to God, which thus occasion the just sorrows and complaints of his Ministers and dearest People.

And let me further put it to your Conscience; whether in your private Addresses to God, you can say, that you are griev'd in heart for your Brethren deprived of their Liberties, and that you have condescended to them as far as possibly you could without sinning, and that you would do all that in you lies for their restauration, that might not provoke him, and

be a burthen to your own Consciences; and that it is the interest of Christ, and the Edification and Salvation of Souls which you aimed at, in your proceedings against them. Can you make such Professions as these to God? Or to men, as you will answer it at the great and dreadful day of accounts? I leave it to your calm and sober Considerations.

I shall no longer stand to importune you; but (as hoping I have not been speaking all this while to the wind) entreat you to take into your serious review, the Petition for Peace, presented to you by the Divines appointed by His Majesty, to treat with you about Church-affairs. There may you see what their Requests are, and the pressing Reasons with which they enforce them: Requests so reasonable, That, nothing but sad Experience could have convinced me, they were deniable; Reasons so evident, that I am perswaded they are unanswerable: And in this perswasion I am more confirm'd from their being railed at, and scribled against (which was all the answer I ever heard of) by a Gentleman, from whom, if my present Paper can escape a suppressing, it fears not an Answer: for his violence is much more to be dreaded than his Reason. Now sleight not, I beg you, these entreaties, because you can easily deny them: for the cause I plead is just and equal, and of weighty moment, which I refer to your impartial debates, and leave the event to the disposure of that God, for whose Honour it was (if I know my self) that I undertook this plea. And him I shall humbly follow with my Prayers, That this Supplication, which I am writing *August* 24. may through his good Providence, and the favour of Authority, do something to the reversing of the Act, whose being in force, took date from This day three years since) This fatal Day that deserves to be wrote in Black Letters in *England*'s Calendar.

Grant this Oh my God, for thy Son Christ Jesus sake, I beseech thee, and let all that seek thy Glory, and the Prosperity of thy Church, say, Amen.

If any upon the reading of this, should argue me, either of too great confidence in making such an attempt, or want of judgment to conceive there was any probability of the success, when much more likely endeavours have been uneffectual; Let such know, That when I had designed to do my utmost towards a discovery of those Sins, which have provoked Gods anger against us; I should have thought my self unfaithful to the Cause I undertook, had any fear or pretence of Reason prevailed with me, to pass silently over a miscarriage of such a nature, as I have manifested this to be, so fruitful of, and complicate with, many others. And if any thing unequal be framed by a Law, I hope that alters not the nature of it so far, as to make it above a Subject to call things by their own names. Had an Act pass'd for the toleration of Drunkenness, or any the like Sin,

I should have taken the boldness to represent the ill nature and consequences of it. And though it is not impossible but prejudice may spy out very great faults, yet, I hope, both as to the matter and manner of Discourse, I have not transgress't the bounds of sobriety, modesty, nor that duty which I owe my Superiours.

Moreover, I conceived, That now God calls us all to search our hearts, and review our ways; they who themselves put us upon this work, and exhort us to Repentance and Prayer, will not be unwilling to reflect upon themselves and their own actions, as remembring they are men subject to the same mistakes and frailties that the rest of the sons of lapst *Adam* are. And if indeed it be made evident, That amongst other Errands, one voice of the Rod now upon us, is, *Let my people go, that they may serve me*; Let my faithful Ministers have liberty to advance my Gospel. I hope, those, who are particularly called to from Heaven, will not be disobedient.

Again, I was willing so far as was consistent with my main Design, to represent to the World (if any yet be ignorant of it) the nature of the difference betwixt us; however to manifest thus much, how willing, yea, how earnestly desirous some (if not all) of those suspended from their Ministerial Employments, are to be re-admitted to the same; and what reasonable terms they beg, and readily offer a submission to, if they might be heard; that so they, who are so forward to condemn them all as obstinate and perverse, may be more wary of their censures, and confine them to those only whom they know so guilty.

And I hop't I might do something to quicken all those, whose hearts are affected with the Concernments of the Church, to more earnestness in their Addresses to God, That he, in whose hands the heart of Kings and all men are, would incline our Superiours to hearken to the Requests, and graciously to regard the Cause of so many of the Servants of Christ; who, when his Church so much needs their labours, and they would so willingly spend themselves in the service of Souls, are to the sadning of their hearts, in a great measure rendered unserviceable in their Generations.

And lastly, Thus much however I shall attain, *viz.* the satisfaction of my Conscience in the discharge of my Duty; that I can herein approve my self to God and my own soul, that I have done what in me lies, toward the procuring of my own and others Liberty; that, if it shall still be denied, I may have nothing to charge my self within this respect: and may comfort my self in this, that the improvement of such a Liberty, shall no more be required of me, by the righteous Judge of Heaven and Earth, than the improvement of a great Estate, or a place of Honour, or some such Talent, with which I was never entrusted. And if I obtain but thus much

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(though I strongly hope for more) I shall be far from repenting of my undertaken labour; for I must confess, that seems not to me a small thing, which any way conduceth to my having of boldness before my Lord, at the day of his appearing.

A word or two more I shall take liberty to add upon this Head, before I relinquish it. If the removal of so many Labourers out of the Lords Harvest, is so grievous a Sin, both in its self, and all the sad consequences of it, then all others, and even they themselves, so far as they have contributed to their removal, or have not since endeavoured to prevent those consequences have cause to be greatly humbled.

And first, Even all the People who have sinned their Teachers into corners, by their Pride, Wantonness, and Unfruitfulness under the Means of Grace: But especially, those private persons, who by their malice either did, or at least endeavoured to contribute to their ejection, or to the hastning of it. What Volumns might be composed (even another Book of Martyrs, or Confessors rather) of the Sufferings many of these Servants of Christ have met with, from the Arbitrary violence of unreasonable men? For I speak not of what the Law hath imposed on them. How have some been toll from place to place, their Houses searched, and they confined, and all this either upon groundless suspition, or false accusations; for where was the man of them, that hath yet been proved guilty of Treason or Sedition? Oh the notorious gross Lyes and Perjuries, that some of their People have been guilty of, both before, and since their ejection?

And yet how readily accepted by many? And what's the ground of all? Why, alas, they had got many Hearers; the Great-ones especially, who were scandalized at the strictness of their Doctrines and Lives, and angry that they might not go to Hell quietly, who studied to be Revenged on them for the disturbance they had received from them in their Sins. Thus I dare confidently say, it hath been with many. And though such may have thought they have been doing God good service, whilst they have been persecuting his Ministers; yet believe it, they shall have small thanks from him that sent them upon that Errand, the delivery whereof may have brought them so much trouble; and that they shall find to their smart without true repentance, if many of them have not already. What, could not men be content to reject the Embassy God sent them, but they must injure and abuse his Embassadors too? Shall not God proclaim war against that people that have thus violated the Law of Nations? They would scarce have done thus to an Embassador sent from the Turk, to perswade us to exchange Christ for *Mahomet*, and the Gospel for the *Alcoran*. But, oh, let them alone, they are safe enough. 'Tis the Factious Non-conformist,

not the Christian Minister they have medled with. Not the Holy Jesus, that came from Heaven to bring men thither, was Crucified; but (if you will believe his Adversaries) an enemy to *Cæsar*, and a mover of Sedition; not *Paul* a Servant and Worshipper of the most High God, but a certain pestilent Fellow, a Ringleader of a Sect, was accused. The World hath still some Policy and Modesty in the drawing up its Indictments, and dare not directly make Holiness a Crime. Well, Sirs, it will be happy for you, if you shall be found to have had so much wit in your anger, as that you shall at last be able to distinguish your selves out of Gods displeasure: but if there should be any thing found in Christianity, engaging to that you call Non-conformity; or if you have made This, but a pretence for your Malignity against That; I would not for a Thousand Worlds be in your case, for all your distinctions, when God shall arise thorowly to plead his Peoples cause: And even now sure he is beginning to do it. And if under the Rod, you continue the sin for which you are lash't, bethink you how to answer that startling Question, *Who ever hardned himself against God, and prosper'd!* And justly hath God suited his Judgments to this sin of the people. A Famine of the Word they feared not, and therefore may God have sent upon Thousands what they account more dreadful, a Famine of bread. 'Tis just that they who loath'd the Manna, and were weary of the bread of Life, should want bread to put into their mouths. And they who could not endure these terrible Preachers, let them now speak, whether the Threatning, or the Execution, be the more terrible? Now, Sirs, what say you to sin? Is it such a harmless thing as you thought it, or not? Doth not God now speak against it, in something a louder and harsher Language, than your Bawling Preachers were wont? Under them you could sleep, but now sleep away this Sermon if you can; even this awakening Sermon, which the Plague of God makes to you. And if you go on in your hardness, you shall find to your cost, that the Hell and Damnation which their Pulpits did so thunder against wickedness, was but a painted fire, to that you shall eternally feel.

But from others who have been the unjust causes of your Sufferings, to your selves, I shall address my self: *Honoured Fathers, and Dear Brethren*, with whom my boldness will not, I am confident, be misconstrued. Since you will readily acknowledge, that all that hath befal'n you, is just, as from God, you cannot then but lay it on your sins; and these, I hope, it is your daily business to reflect on, and beg pardon for. Though I am well assu'd, the holiness, diligence and painfulness of many of you hath been such, that to Men you may well acquit your selves, and may be worthy patterns to others, and shame and silence your Accusers; yet to God you cannot so rea-

dily justifie your selves, I know you dare not. Oh! might you not have done more to promote the interest of your Lord and Master, than you did? Some of you I mean, for I profess without all partiallity or flattery, I think some did strive to the very utmost of their power, to improve all opportunities for the good of Souls, and now in their Consciences they have the fruits of it; but of these there were few, too few. Oh be humbled then for all your Negligence, Covetousness, and Self-seeking, your Pride and Contentions; that you were more averse from the offers of Peace and Union, than you ought; that you kept so much ado about your own ways and opinions, and stood wrangling about this Trifle or that, whilst greater Works were left undone: And daily make Solemn Engagements to God, that if once more he will entrust you with forfeited priviledges, you will be more faithful and vigorous than ever yet you have been, in the work of the Gospel; that you will no more take your ease, nor seek your selves, nor waste precious time in needless Controversies; nor confine godliness to any without Book-niceties of your own; nor lay the Peace of the Church upon your particular Opinions, but will readily join with all that are willing, in the owning and pressing only the things that are necessary to Salvation; and will use all means, both publike and private, for the conversion of Souls: And if God grant your prayers, as in his due time he may. See that you remember these promises.

But 'tis the second branch I would have you chiefly to consider, and that is, your not endeavouring what you might, to prevent some of those sad consequences of your exclusion, which I before mentioned, in that you have not embrac't all the opportunities that were yet afforded you, for the doing good to the people, to bring them from sin to God; and so your negligence may have hastned and help't forward Gods indignation. Let me not be thought too sawcy, Sirs, I beseech you, for in the same plain dealing I have used hitherto, I am resolved to conclude. I must needs say then, if they are not to be excused who have deprived you of your publick Liberty, no more are you, if you have not improved that private Liberty they left you for doing your Masters work. I must profess it hath troubled me, to hear men pray so earnestly, and talk so much for the Restauration of their Liberties, and to see them make so little use of those the Law allow'd them. And it might too much tempt men to fear, that their Secular interests went nearest to their hearts, and that they chiefly mean a Liberty, to receive their maintenance again, to live they and their Families at their former Rates; or to be able to insult over, and give Laws to those in the Church, who now trample upon, and despise them. I know *Daily Bread* may be pray'd for, but the *Coming of Gods Kingdom* must have the priority, both in our prayers and endeavours.

The

The Case is weightie, Sirs, and deserves your serious consideration, To go and preach the Gospel you entered into an Engagement, and received a Commission, the validitie whereof (though to some of you given, by the laying on of the hands of the Presbyterie onlie) I suppose you question not, nor I think scarce anie one else, till verie lately. Well, it being thus, I would know how you can shift off the necessitie that lies upon you to preach this Gospel, and the Woe in case of your negligence. You may replie, *You have not leave given you, nor yet any maintenance allowed.* But pray you, Who gave the Apostles and Primitive Christians leave for Three hundred Years after Christ, and who maintain'd them? Where was such a Clause inserted in your Commission, *Always provided that the Rulers of the World give you leave to perform your Duties?* This would agree with the Politicks of that Gentleman, who being, I fear, design'd, to take God out of the World, in courtesie to us, somewhat to prevent our confusion, would set up Monarchs little less limited than He. But if our Ancestors had gone by this Rule, where had the Gospel been? or where is it excepted, *That you must have such and such provisions, or else not to Preach?* For my own part I acknowledge my self a verie mean Casuist, and ignorant of Twentie subtle distinctions here, which might be needful. And I am verie confident, I am speaking to se w, but are more knowing, and better studied in this point, than my self; and great difficulties there are to me, concerning the relation betwixt a Pastor, and a people, as matters now stand with us; how far it holds, and how far men are engaged to perform all the duties of that relation; wherefore to that I shall say little or nothing; onlie so far as concerns my self, and verie manie more, yea, all in part, I use thus plainlie to resolve the case to my self; when my understanding is most help't, by a powerful apprehension of death and judgment near at hand.

I take it for the indispensable duty of every man, to employ himself to the utmost in his place and calling, in answering the ends of his Creation and Redemption, the glorifying of God, in doing his best to save his own, and others Souls. And if I have been Solemnly Consecrated to this work, to make it my verie particular Calling, no Command of the highest Emperor in the World can disoblige me from it: God must be honoured, the Gospel proclaimed, Souls saved, my Vows performed, storm and rage, forbid and hinder it, who will or can. But if there happen such terms to be put upon me, as the condition of my more open exercise of the Function I am devoted to, which terms, after the use of all due means for Information, I judge I cannot lawfully submit to; but yet others will, whose apprehensions vary from mine, who will in some competent measure carry on the Publick work w as employed in, which I am forbid to meddle with: Then, in such a case,

(which,

(which, if I mistake not, is ours) I will cast about which way I may do most, for those ends I am obliged to carry on. And since Christianity it self is not forbid to be preach'd, only I must not do it, viz. not Publickly; but yet others will, and in many places do: And I foresee, that by rushing upon the Publick Preaching, more hurt would come of my disobedience, than good; and I should be more out of a capacity for future Service, either by Imprisonment, Banishment, or the like, (which are not so much to be shunn'd as Sufferings, but as they hinder the attainment of my ends) I will then see what private opportunities are afforded me for those ends, and these with all readiness I will accept, and diligently improve; as in which, all circumstances considered, I may do most for the advancement of the Gospel: And therefore is not to be thought an effect of Cowardize, a baseness unworthy him that remembers what it founds to be a *CHRISTIAN*; but as my taking that way which most conduceth to God's glory, and the Interest of Religion.

But if Circumstances should so alter the case, that I see, venturing upon Publick Preaching, be the most probable way for the accomplishment of my just designs, then I will embrace that: Or if I should be forbid privately to endeavour the Salvation of Souls, then I must and will disobey, let what will be the events; because such commands directly contradict those ends I must promote, and leave me no way for the attaining of them: Yea, though I dye for it, I must tell those within my reach, who gave us our Being, and keeps us alive, and to what end; who shed his blood for us, and why; and what we must do to be made partakers of the benefits he hath purchased: I must tell them of the evil and danger of sin, whither it leads, and what an Heaven holiness will end in. These are matters that the world must know, though a thousand deaths attend upon the Publishers: And I would no longer care for a tongue or hand, than whilst I might speak or write of them. One word more, and I shall conclude this: But it so happening since the loss of my Liberty, that my self, and those that depend on me, may be reduc't to such pressing necessities, that I must be taken up much more than I was wont, some way or other, for the procuring of a Livelihood, (the sad case at present, of many precious, eminent Ministers) then I will betake my self to such care and pains as is requisite hereto; in the mean time not relinquishing my great Work, but regarding the world, as all ought to do, (and indeed the most of what I have said, is applicable to private Christians) only with a subserviency to it. And this we may find justified by *Paul* himself, whom, if you had found busie at work in making his Tents, yet you could not have charged him with neglect of the Gospel; for even

then

then he was contriving how to render it most acceptable.

And thus I have given in my brief thoughts of this Case, which, though it may seem a digression from the matter in hand, yet is it not so from my main design, if it may do the least to quicken any to a sense of their duty, and the neglects of it, and to put them upon more carefulness for the futur:. And hence many may see, how guilty they have been, in not laying out themselves for the good of souls, so far as they might, without breaking any Law, or running any hazard. Oh Sirs, you are men sure somewhat sensible of what worth a soul is: and what weighty things Salvation and Damnation are, which careless wretches do but jest with, as words of course. Why have you not then laboured more in these matters! Let none misunderstand me, I speak to the negligent only. Could we have done no more for God and mens souls, to inform the ignorant, convince the obstinate, quicken the godly, than we have done? Might there not have been, through the blessing of God even upon our private labours, fewer to provoke, and more to please him, more to strive with him by their prayers to turn away his wrath, than there are?

And upon the same account, I would beg all private Christians to lay to heart their lamentable dulness, and uselessness in the Places and Towns where they dwell. Oh how little are their Neighbours and Acquaintance, I wish, I might not say their Families, better for many of them! So little do they make Religion their business: but in all their converse are even like other men; only plodding on in a life-less Profession, and track of Duties, and appearing a little zealous for some By-opinions of their own. It was time for them to be raised out of their heavy, luke-warm temper, and to be made to mind and relish a little more the weighty Truths and Matters of Religion. Reader, Art thou an Honourer of Christ, and a Lover of Mankind? Why tell me then, is it not a most lamentable thing to consider, That almost all the World, yea, almost all the Christian, and Reformed Christian World, is drowned in Wickedness; and that there is so little Savoury Salt in it; so few that study and labour to make the Gospel obtain amongst men in the life and power of it? How do the most seek their own things? how few the things of Jesus Christ? Oh that men were once throughly perswaded, that his things were theirs! Some are too busie about Puppet-playes, the petty trifles of the World, which, yet to those, who are swallowed up in them, seem weighty and important, to mind much what becomes of mens immortal Souls. Let the poor Curate, that must live by it, see to such low affairs. Others have so much to do to keep up their

their own Parties, Opinions and Customs, That Christ may look to his Gospel himself for them, except as it lies in the way to the things they account most their Concern. But all you the Ministers of Christ, if indeed you take his work it self for your Honour, Pleasure and Wages, though many of you may want those encouragements which are so requisite and desirable for your success; yet, be awakened to do all the service you can to your Lord and Master. Let us not stand accusing any for the removal of our opportunities, whilest we have so many before us, if we had the hearts and skill to use them. How glad would the Primitive Christians, or our Protestant Martyrs have been of those Priviledges we enjoy, though they might earnestly have desired more? What Sirs, are there no poor Souls near you, that cry aloud for your help, to save them from the burning lake, to rescue them out of the jaws of Death, and snares of the Devil, by whom they are led captive at his will? These, these are they, upon whom especially you ought to employ all your skill and pains; and from him that died for them, your shall have your reward. I know the Godly also call for strengthning, direction, comfort and quickning; but surely your principal, (much less your only) Work is not with them; the miserable Creatures that are just at the Graves mouth, and yet know not what they came into the World for, require speedy and seasonable help. Oh how many Thousands may now be out of your reach, whom you once might have spoken to, but did not! Who hinders you from going to such, and discourfing to them the matters that concern their everlasting Peace? Cannot you watch opportunities when they can best have while to hear you; and are most likely to regard you? You that live amongst your former people, cannot you go to their Houses, and take all occasion of converse with them, and be inculcating on them the great Truths and Duties of the Gospel? If you never formerly took this course of private dealing with your people, set upon it now, and you know not but it may be more effectual than all your former labours were. Some that have tried, have had good success. However, you will have comfort in doing your duty. Oh go often, as you have time, amongst your poor neighbours, and see in what a state their souls are, and be not so uncharitable and hard-hearted, as to see them dropping into Hell, and yet do nothing to prevent it. Though 'tis amongst Strangers you are cast, yet acquaint your selves with them, and do them all the good you can, as knowing every man is your Neighbour that needs your help. Put them upon reading good Books, and take account of them, and learn what their knowledge in Religion is, and accordingly instruct and advise them. But far be it from me, to presume to give directions for the Work; others have done it fully; and you know

it well enough if you would but set to it with all your might: oh follow then the example of *Paul*, who went about from house to house, night and day, warning and beseeching every one with tears. What do you think this is not preaching the Gospel? Do you think that only, whilst you stand on a high place in the midst of an Assembly? Did not Christ preach the Gospel to a Woman alone, and *Philip* to the Eunuch? In some respects 'tis evident personal discourse hath much the advantage on publick Preaching, and why may we not expect Gods blessing here upon, as well as on the other? Now Sirs, we have an happy opportunity of discovering what pure love to the Gospel will do with us, without any hopes of a Temporal Reward. What moved you to Preach to your People before? I know you will not joyn with the Quakers in accusing your selves, and say it was for your Tythes. What then, was it a desire to save the Souls of your people; Why I hope their Salvation is as precious in your eyes now, as then, and do not they as much need your assistance? Why then do not you continue it? Say not, the people will not hear it, for many will. Try them once again, and where any are obstinate, let your love and courtesie do its utmost to overcome them. Oh let us but work our own hearts into lively affectionate apprehensions of the great concernments of Souls, and study more what God is, and why he made us; what the Death of Christ imports, what it is for a Soul to be saved or damned for ever; and we shall scarce be able to refrain speaking to all we can light upon; but we shall rather ask every man we meet, whether he hath yet done his best to make sure his everlasting happiness? whether hee's yet got from under the wrath of God, and out of danger of Hell? These things will be ready to burst from us in the very streets, or open Congregations. Oh had we but that zeal, and those affections which these matters deserve, and will very well warrant, what work might we make in the world, yet keeping in all due bounds of sobriety and prudence? Though perhaps we might be counted mad-men for our pains, as Christ himself and the Apostle *Paul* were. But remember then, I would have you spend your zeal upon the things that are worth it, proportionat to the weight of the truths you insist on. I would not have you take this pains to make men of your opinion, in controverted matters. Beware of that, designing a party will spoil all your work. Labour you to make them Members of Christ, what need you care then what particular Church they are members of, or wherein they differ from you in matters, that concern not their Salvation? Do the best you can to heal all breaches, make none, widen none. Let men censure us as long as they will for Schismatical and Turbulent, and if all our professions to the contrary may not be heard, yet let our practises witness to God, to the world, and to our own Consciences, that we are true lovers of

piety and peace. See that you have no other aims but Gods glory, and here's own, and Crown you for your labour of love. Say not now, this is a difficult work, but tell me whether it be not needful? If the Devil and his Instruments sit still, shall you so too? Remember what a Covenant you made in Baptisme, beside all other Engagements since.

Think what you live for, and where you expect to stand shortly, and tell me whether a life thus laid out for God, will not then be your comfort? Oh for the Lords sake then all you his Servants up and be doing, and fear not: For God will be with you, what are you afraid of enemies? Do you think this will procure you more hatred and suffering? And awaken Powers to greater jealousies, and cause them to abridge you of the liberty yet reserved? Never fear it, Sirs, why don't you know what I am pressing you to? Is it to propagate Christianity; and this is a work that must and shall be done: for God hath said it, and he'l see to it, and for this the World is yet kept up. Oh Sirs, pure, simple, and uncorrupted Christianity, deserves all our time and study, and pains to advance it. And it hath such Comforts and Crowns, for its resolved Friends and Persecuted followers, that would make a man even long to be suffering for it, and the more he suffers, the more he will still love, the firmlier adhere to it. Christianity, It is a Religion of that force and excellency, that it defies oppositions, and scorns all banks and bounds. It awes its greatest Adversaries, and a Prisoner at the bar with it, may make his Judge upon the Bench to tremble, and the sturdy Jaylour that even now whipt him, come quaking to beg a Pardon. Fear not Prisons for the Gospel can never be bound. Let this alone be your rule, and value not what Law or will of man shall contradict it. Kings and Emperours with all their Officers, and Armies, Edicts and Authorities, are but Trophee's to its Power; like dams they make it rise the higher, and overbear all before it; experience confirms what I say. This cake of barley bread will tumble down all the Tents of a Midianitish Host; The noise of its Trumpets, the light of the Lamps (though the Pitchers that bear them, these earthen vessels our bodies, be broken) and crying out, The Word of the Lord, and his Son Christ Jesus, will discomfit Innumerable Armies, and make them run, and cry, and flee. This is the Gospel, and let all that read these lines say, Let it go on and Prosper, let it run and be Glorified, and strike its healing Sword to the hearts of its Adversaries. Now this is it, and this alone, which I would beseech all to spend themselves for, and fear not but it will bear your charges. Let your work be purely Gods, and if he can bear you out he will; and I hope you don't doubt that. But let me once again beg you, to see that you make the cause you work for, the same that Christ and his Apostles drove on in the world, and then how joyfully may you suffer

for it, whatever men call your actions and designs. 'Tis nothing strange to suffer for Christ from nominal Christians; and for Peace and Truth, from men that call themselves Orthodox and Catholick; this hath been often in the world! Let these the weighty, but much neglected Doctrines and Commands of the Gospel be urged with all earnestness, but lesser things less regarded. Talk less of the Times, but more of Eternity. Stand not discoursing who should have Power in the Church to men, that are yet under the Power of the Devil; not of a Ceremony or Form of Prayer, to those that know not God, nor their own souls. What strange things would these be to Catechise an Heathen in; who are they much fitter for Carnal ones? But oh labour to work men into the true temper and Spirit of Religion, which consists so much in love to God and our Brethren; and then the new nature that is in them, the inward relish of their Souls, and renewed Principles of light, will enable them to judge of things that differ, and all matters of moment God will reveal to them.

Again, I have need to require it, that I be not judged immodest, if the confused haste I now write in, have carried me out to a more than seemly earnestness; nor yet count me Pragmatical for venturing thus to advise, since I desire no more regard than what the reasonableness and weight of the things proposed, shall be found to deserve.

And thus at length, through Gods assistance, I am even come to the end of my task. I have endeavoured to shew wherein it is, we have from the highest to the lowest done amiss, and provoked God against us. I have also mingled Directions, so far as my intended brevity would permit, for the performance of those duties, that may appease his wrath, and make us happy in his favour.

And oh that these weak endeavours might have an issue answerable to their Design! then how confidently durst I say, we should be an happy people, by becoming holy, which is all I have aimed at. But what talk I of my endeavours? What shall be now the issue of Gods Judgments that have been upon us? Shall we be bettered by them, or not? Oh! one would think there should scarce an obstinate Sinner be left in the Nation after this! But that we should all with one consent return to the God who hath smitten us, from whom we have back-slidden? One would think we should now imitate the Children of *Israel*, whom after Eminent Judgments we find entring into Covenant, to seek and serve the Lord their God, to which their Kings were wont to call them. And oh that God would put it into the heart of his Majesty, to engage all his People even from one end of the Land to the other, to enter into such a solemn vow, that we will in all things be careful to walk in those ways God hath enjoyned us, and not in any thing voluntarily

voluntarily break his holy Laws? Oh that some such an Engagement was made the Bond of our Union, our entrance into, and observance of it, the condition of our Church-Communion? Of what a blessed consequence would even this be? But this and all other such great wishes, let us reserve for our prayers; and give me leave with some jealousie to demand, Whether all that God hath done, shall be lost upon us? What shall our Nation still be drowned in sin? So soon as ever the Rod's from off us, shall we to our old courses again? Shall Profaneness abound, and Religion be despised again? Shall Tavern's, and Brothel-houses, and Play-houses be frequented, and Gods Worship slighted, and neglected again? Will the abominable and filthy be so still? Shall Blasphemy, and Swearing, and Cursing, be as loud as ever? Will men again to the World, and their Pleasures, as busily as ever? and make as light of his Threatnings and Promises, and laugh at the talk of Death and Judgement, as they were wont to do? Shall God still be mock'd with Formalities, and dishonered by mens Lives? Will the Hater of Godliness still rise higher in his Rage? Will the execution of Justice be as much neglected as ever? And will the Man of Violence swell his Fingers into Loyns, and exchange his Rods for Scorpions? Will men still close their eyes against the clearest light, and reject the apparent and only means for the reconciling our differences, and establishing our peace upon sure foundations? Or will they yet strive to aggravate the bitterness of mens spirits, and pursue their design of crushing them into the very dirt? Shall we yet be rent and torn with animosities and divisions? And shall they that ought to cure, keep up and encrease them? Shall we still, instead of accusing our selves and sin, dip our Pens and Tongues in Gall, and cry out, one side on the Tyrannical, Cruel and Oppressive; the other, on the Murmurers, Male-contents, and Fault-finders? Will these, and all other disorders be still continued? Oh God forbid that it should be thus, that we should grow worse under the Physicians hand, and that none of his strongest Medicines should work? Shall we cause God to complain of us, that he would have healed us, but we would not be healed? That in vain hath he smitten us, for that we would not receive Correction? Oh that such a poor Worm as I, could do any thing to prevent such a sad conclusion; for wo to us, if God depart from us, leaving us to our selves, resolving to strike us no more, but letting us alone till he destroy us in our sins. My words are like to spread but a little way, but oh that they might have some effect where they light.

To thee, *Reader*, let me betake my self: What have the workings of thy Soul been, whilst thou hast been reading these Lines? And what influence have they upon thee? What, hath not thy Conscience smote thee? speak the truth, and told thee plainly, *Thou hast been a Troubler of the Land, and*

hast

hast help't to bring the Plague upon us? In the sight of God, I demand of thee, *Hast thou not been guilty of some of the sins here described, Covetousness or Pride, Luxury or Oppression, or the like?* And what now? dost thou condemn thy self for thy follie? Wilt thou make all speed to get a Peace confirmed betwixt God and thy Soul, and a Separation made betwixt thy Soul and Sin? Or on the other hand, Art thou not in a rage, that thy sin hath been too plainlie displayed, and too much disgrac't? Thy darling sin which thou art resolved to keep, though thou have Hell with it? Art thou not framing excuses, and saying, *Thou canst not believe that such and such things which thou hast a mind to, are such heinous matters, and so displeasing to God?* Or else art thou remiss and stupid, never thinking this or that, onlie tossing over the Book, and passing this censure on it, and throwing it down without anie more regard? Trulie this is it I most fear; for this is the general prevailing temper: Oh therefore that I could but rouze thee to an apprehension of thy self, and thy own estate. Reader, Sure thou art one that wouldst not willinglie be damn'd; Wilt thou then hearken to a most reasonable request I shall make to thee, before I conclude? Thou hast now been awhile reading these Lines, which have been as a Bill of Indictment against our Land, and have deciphered what our especial crying sins are. Wilt thou now when thou shut'st the Book, get alone, and spend but as much time in reading thy own heart and life, and search and see whether none of these sins be thine? It may be this is a work thou never didst in thy life yet, but wilt thou now bring thy heart to it? 'Tis in vain to ask thee, whether thou wilt forsake thy sin, if thou wilt not set upon examining thy self to find it out. What say'st thou then in the Name of God to this my earnest Request? What, shall I be denied? Is it a great matter I ask of thee, to withdraw thy self from the noise and bustle of the World, and of thy own vain thoughts, and to make a diligent search into the state of thy own soul, that being sensible of thy sin and danger, thou may'st yet get help? Wil't thou do thus much, or tell me plainlie, *Wilt thou be damn'd first?* For I'le assure thee, thy Damnation is never like to be prevented without serious Consideration, and that's it I would beg thee to: Which is it thou wilt choose? To set upon thy Dutie, or to venture upon Hell? Sure thy mind cannot but answer one way or other. *Reader*, be awakened, take not these for words of course, from God I speak to thee, 'tis God looks on thee; he knows the thoughts and intentions of thy heart, upon thy reading these demands. And whatever course thou take, whether thou wilt examine thy self, and forsake thy sins, or not, yet thou canst not say but God hath given thee fair Warning. He now stands over thee with his Rod in his hand, and asks thee, *Whether yet thou wilt seek, and serve him?* If thy Self-examinations shall have made

way

way at all for such a demand, I would know in the next place, *Whether thou wilt strive to put away sin, every sin from thee, or wilt thou not? Art thou yet willing to be reconciled to God?* Be it known to thee, *oh sinner*, whoever thou art, yet there is hopes from the Lord your Maker and Redeemer, I tell thee so: What would the Damned give for such a word? If thou wilt but impartiallie consider thy wayes, bewail thy sin, and loath it; turn from it, and form the World, to the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, resting on his mercie in and through his Son, setting upon a course of serious holiness, and continuing therein to the end, doing this, be assured thy Soul shall live. Something of this I spoke at the beginning, and cannot stand to say more on it now: Here's enough to inform thee of (if thou knewest it not) what thy Dutie is? *But art thou willing to perform it?* One would think thou shouldest soon be resolve what to do. The question is, *Whether thou wilt do thy utmost to change thy heart and life, that thou mayest be saved? Or whether thou wilt go on in sin, and be damned?* I have told thee upon what terms thou may'st yet escape thy Ruine; but withall know, This must be done speedily, or perhaps not at all. If thou delayest one hour, thou may'st be in Hell the next. God hath born with thee long, now he is making shorter work; he will not always wait for nothing. Thy heart quickly he demands, this he will have, or thy hearts blood.

Away with thy sin then with all possible speed; if thou retain it, it will be thy death; for a Hue and Cry's gone out from Heaven against it, and the man in whose hands 'tis found, shall surely dye: Then cast it away, if thou love thy life, thy everlastidg life.

But what art thou one of those senseless, brutish, blockish souls, that a man had almost as good spend his breath upon a stone wall, as talk to thee! Art thou nothing moved with all thou readest or hearest, but takest all for words of course, which thou forgettest as soon as the noise is out of thy ears? Dost thou now lay aside the Book, and go about thy wonted business, as if thou hadst not been reading for Life or Death? But a kind of Story, that no way concerns thee? Wilt thou now rise up, and go to thy worldly cares, thy Company, or vain Discourse, instead of getting alone to God with humble acknowledgements of thy sin, and earnest cryes for mercy? If thou wast infected with the Plague, and hadst been reading what Medicines thou shouldst use, wouldst thou lay by the Book, and never mind more, as if thou hadst done enough to read them, without taking care to apply them? And would thou now be guilty of a madness as much greater than this, as sin and Hell, are worse than the Plague and Death? Art thou resolved though Christ himself should kneel to thee, and beseech thee (as he doth by me) to search thy heart, and review thy ways, and detest thy sins, that he might

save

have thee, that yet thou wouldest not grant his desire, nor ever put thy self to so much Labour as Conversion will cost thee? If thou be such a stupid, resolved sinner, that wilt remain in thy old wayes, come on it what will; yea, and believest all shall be well enough with thee for all that, what can I say to thee more? God be Judge between thee and me. Thou art destroyed, not because thou couldest have no help, nor because it was not offered thee, but because thou didst wilfully refuse it. But, poor Creature, my heart even akes for thee, and loth I am to leave thee in this wretched, dull, distracted temper; wherein if Death, that is now so busie abroad, should find thee, thou art undone for ever. Oh that yet I could speak something that would make thee feel and fear. Tell me then, thou who art now so bold and resolute, so sottish and careless, Dost thou not think thou shalt dye? Why, what wilt thou do then? Think on it, and think again, I beseech thee. Is it not great odds, but the Contagion may shortly reach thee? What course wilt thou then take, when thou shalt see the Tokens of God upon thee? Which way wilt thou look, or what wilt thou do for help? Then go to the sins thou hast loved so dearly, and see what comfort they will afford. Now call for a Cup, or a Whore; Never be daunted man. Shall one of thy courage quail, that couldst have mockt at the Threatnings of the Almighty God! What so boon and jolly but now, and now down ith' mouth? Here's a sudden change indeed! Where are thy Companions? All fled? Where are thy darling pleasures? All forsaken thee! What will thy Bags, and Bills, and Bonds, do thee no good? Why shouldest thou be dejected? Thou art a man of Worship, perhaps a Lord, or a Knight, or Gentleman; go chear thy self, review thy good Purchases, think of thy high Titles, and rich Revenues! Go Gallants, get to your Glass; Powder and Curle, Paint and Spot, Deck and Adorn you, as you were wont? What, do you take no pleasure to view your Pale faces? Do your hearts sink within you like a stone? Why how now poor creature, what hath the world left thee? The world thou didst so dearly love, that Heaven was but a trifle to it! What, hast thou misplac't thy heart on a treacherous Friend, that fails thee in thy greatest need? Must thou now all in silence and sadness groan forth thy wretched Soul into another world? Now, now wretch, what hath thy sin and carelessness brought thee to? Now where is thy life of mirth and sport? What wilt thou do now, when thy own comforts have left thee, and God loaths thee, and calls out thy Death-bed howlings with disdain? What dost begin to call upon him now? Dost think a few good words shall serve thy turn? Read *Jer.* 2. 28. *Go get thee to thy own gods, see whether they can help and deliver thee.* Say not I would drive thee to

despair;

deſpair; no, I would fain prevent it, and ſo may'ſt thou, if thou wilt but hearken in time, and that time's juſt now; for Death is even at thy back, and perhaps will take thee up as ſoon as the Book's laid down.

But perhaps thou art one that think'ſt thy ſelf ſafe, and that this nothing belongs to thee, becauſe thou may'ſt be recovered from the ſickneſs, or got out of the reach of it; or it may be ſo abated, that thou doſt not fear it; and therefore thou art ready fooliſhly to cry out with *Agag*, *The bitterneſs of death is paſt*; but oh be convinc't of thy lamentable ſottiſhneſs; for thou may'ſt yet be hewn in pieces for all that. Read *Amos* 9.12, 3.4. And tell me whether God will not find thee out. Thou art run away from the City perhaps, but not from thy ſin; and therefore thou carrieſt the Plague along with thee, which ſooner or later will break out. But though thou eſcape the Plague, art thou then ſecure? If thou canſt but out-live the Mortality, doſt thou think all is well then? All danger over? No, hold there, Sinner; God hath not done with thee ſo, believe it, the worſt is yet to come. Alas, man, Death, Judgement and Hell are behind ſtill. I, but coming they are apace, and overtake thee at laſt they will, even all of them, if thou look not about thee in time. Patch and piece up thy mouldring Carkaſs as long as thou canſt; and ſhift thee hither and thither, from this diſeaſe or that; but after all be aſſured, *Thou ſhalt dye*. And after Death hath done its work upon thee, and the Judgment paſt, and Senrence executed, if thou then find all well with thee, boaſt and ſpare not; but till then, be ſilent. But if yet thou art fully bent to keep thy ſin, let me beg thee to think a little what is that Hell thou art leaping into. Oh think what the wrath, the flaming, unquenchable wrath of God is. Doſt thou make a piſh at it? 'Tis becauſe thou art an Infidel, or haſt loſt thy wits. I know thou canſt not a while to think of it now, thou haſt pleaſanter things to take up thy thoughts, than Death and Hell; and therefore thou laugheſt and ſingeſt, and merrily throweſt away thy hours, as if no hurt was near thee, whilſt thou ſtandeſt tottering on the very brink of the bottomleſs pit! And all this while, how many Devils whom thou ſeeſt not, ſtand ſome gaping to receive thee, and ſome labouring to make thee ſure, and till thee on? And multitudes of Deaths are waiting for a Commiſſion, any one of them to thruſt thee in, and then farwell all hope for ever. Oh ſtand but one hour, or half an hour in a day, in the ſober thoughts of Eternity, and go on in ſin, if thou canſt. Good Reader, let me entreat thee to this courſe; but if thou cryeſt, Thou haſt ſomewhat elſe to do; Know, thou ſhalt ſhortly have nothing elſe to do, but to feel that which now thou wilt not be brought to think of, that thou mighteſt avoid it; and then ſay, if thou hadſt not good

counsel given thee once, if thou hadst had the wit and the grace to take it. One moments experience shall at length convince thee more, than all thy hearing or reading would. Thou counsest Plague, Famine and Sword, Earthquakes, Thunder and Lightning, terrible things: oh then what's Hell, the very dregs, the Ocean of that fury, of which these are but small drops! There it is that God will make the very power of his hottest intolerable wrath to appear, and in those rivers of brimstone, those scorching flames of his anger, must thou lye down for ever; oh for ever, ever, man, think but a while how long is that. Might but the undone souls return, to describe this place of torments to their old companions, what a Language should we hear? Might but *Dives* himself have been sent to his jovial Brethren, that little thought where their departed Brother was, nor what they themselves were hastning to, in what a passionate manner would he have beg'd them off from sin, that led to all that endless Woe! How would he have disturbed them in the midst of their merriments and feastings, and even have made their hearts to quake, and their hair stand an end with his terrible expressions? But, Reader, if thou art one, who wilt be frightned from Hell by no descriptions, but of those that have seen it, thy feeling is like to prevent thy fear. What say'st thou then after all? Art thou yet resolved to prepare for Death, and prevent Damnation, or not? If thou art, happy man thou, that ever thou wast born; but if thou art not, I can stay to say no more, but even take thy course, and when thou feelest the event, then say, *Woe ther sound Repentance, and an holy life, had not been a cheap and easie, a gainful and happy way, to have prevented everlasting misery.* But the good Lord have mercy upon thee; and work these convictions with power upon thy soul, whilst they may do thee any good.

I shall finish all with a word or two to all those that truly love and fear the Lord. *Oh Sirs, you that have known God, and are interested in his favour, and are well acquainted at the Throne of his Grace, to which you have oft in time of trouble and need, made your recourse, and thence have received seasonable comfort and supply. All you to whom Prayer is no strange work; now arise and betake your selves to God with all seriousness and speed; Cast your selves down before him, bewailing your own sins, and the sins of the Land, and lye in the gap to stop the farther proceedings of his wrath, that he may not root us up from being a people; nor yet so far give us off, that we should continue to be a wicked and rebellious people; for then destruction from the Lord will certainly be our portion. Strive with him to remove his Rod, but above all, to work those ends whereto it is appointed.*

I have endeavoured to shew you, and your selves are sensible of it, what sins we are suffering for: Oh pray that every abominable thing

may

may be cast forth from amongst us, and those blessed works accomplish't, which would make us in the eye of God and man a people glorious and happy. Beg earnestly that the Gospel may be advanc't, Holiness encouraged, Wickedness suppresst and punish't, our Divisions healed; that from the Prince upon the Throne, to the Beggar upon the Dunghill, there may be an effectual Reformation of all we have done amiss; that we may yet find favour in the sight of God, and enjoy his residence, and gracious presence amongst us; that he may delight in us, and rejoyce over us to do us good. Both alone, and in Companies, as you have opportunitie, besiege Heaven with your humble and affectionate prayers. God will not be deaf to your cry, he knows your voice, which comes from your very Soul; he will not reject the Petitions you present with pure hands; your prayers are his delight, all you that are his humble, upright ones: 'Tis you must now prevail, or we are undone. Though you may be a people, hated, derided and undervalued by those amongst whom you live, yet must your intercessions be accepted on their behalf, through our great Intercessor, or else they are like to perish. 'Tis you that must run with your Censers, and stand betwixt the Living and the Dead, that so the Plague may be stayed. It is the incense and perfume of your prayers, that through Christ, must appease an angrie God, and clear an infected Air. It is not the Lip-service of the profane sinner, or the formal Hypocrite, that will do us anie good; let his prayers be by heart, or by rote, within-book, or without, that makes no great matter; but if he be one whose heart is far from God, and whose life is a provocation to him, who still goes on in his sin, let him be never so devout in the Church, or on his knees, and roar and weep with never so much passion and noise, the howling of a Dog is as acceptable to God, as such hypocritical devotion. Shall the tongue that was just now Cursing and Swearing, come presentlie and fall a praying, and think to be accepted? Doth God delight to hear his Name taken in vain, as these senseless sinners do in their solemnest services? No, no, but it is the feryent prayer of you who are indeed Righteous, that's like to be effectual and prevailing. You have the spirit of supplication interceding within you, assisting you with unutterable sighs and groans; whether with a Form, or without, makes not the difference; and you have a powerful Advocate enforcing your Requests: wherefore to God betake your selves, lie at his feet, plead with him for Rulers and People, his Church and Ministers, your Friends and Enemies, City and Countrey, your Towns and Families, and for your own Souls: Follow him day and night, and give him no rest, till he shall hear in Heaven, and have mercy, and establish his *Zion* a praise both amongst us, and in the whole Earth.

And be exhorted also now to lay about you all you can, for the awakening and convincing of the poor creatures that are near you, that Death may not find their Souls unready. If you be in places where the Infection is, or is dailie fear'd, improve such a time with ignorant and careless ones; manie may be willing to hear you now, who would have laugh't at serious Discourse a few dayes since. When they begin to look on Death as a real thing, and not far off, the fears of it will a little cure them of their distractions; and they'l no longer take Heaven and Hell for jesting matters. This is not a time, Sirs, to be ashamed of Religion; now, if ever, Holiness will be in request, and boldlie shew it self. *Afford your Neighbours then all the helps you can for their precious souls. Go to their Houses, and lend them good Books, and discourse of those matters that you may easily perceive do most concern Dying men*: And let that be your direction for the future in this work; which I would never have you cease, whil'st your selves, and those about you, are mortal men, whose Eternity either of happiness or woe, depends upon their well or ill improvement of this uncertain moment.

And Lastlie, All you Holie Souls, be encouraged chearfullie and confidentlie to receive the Sentence of Death within your selves. Let your spirits revive within you, when you shall see the Waggons that come to fetch you to your *Joseph*, even your Lord, who is gone before to prepare a place for you. Let those that have lived estranged from God, careless of his Service, mad of the World, and running after their pleasures, let them be dejected at the News of Dying; the sad News, that they must leave all their Treasures, and their Joyes, and be carried into a state they thought not of, nor prepared for, there to be reckoned with for their worldlie, loose, and jollie Life, and to bear the effects of their follie for ever. But all you to whom Sin hath been a burden, and Religion your work and pleasure, whose hearts have been taken up with Gods dealings with mankind, and deeplie affected with his mysterious Love in Christ; who have taken it for the business of your Lives, to work out your salvation: In a word, who have chosen God for your portion, and lov'd him more than all things here below, and closed with Christ as your onlie Saviour, to deliver you both from Sin and Hell, and have taken the Holie Spirit for your Sanctifier and Guide; not allowing your selves in known sin, but labouring in all things to approve your selves to God. Now lift up your heads, and comfort your hearts, when you see the day of Death approach. Let not Carnal ones see you dismay'd, for this will make them suspect Religion to be a fancie; so much doth it contradict your Profession, and disgrace both it and you.

Nor

Nor let the kind of Death by which you may be ſent for hence, be pretended as any ground of your trouble and fear. Why ſhould not God chooſe your Death for you, as well as all other things? And let it be of what ſort it will, you have very great reaſon quietly to ſubmit to it. Let Death be welcome and there is nothing in a Plague that can hurt you, or need daunt you. Be very ſenſible of Gods hand now ſtretcht out againſt us, and ſo far manifeſt a reverence and awe; and with a reliance on him, uſe all due means for ſelf-preſervation. But for your ſelves, dread not a Plague, nor any thing it can do upon you; it can but kill your Bodies, and help your Souls out of their priſons, and is there any hurt in that? Let the Spots when you ſee them, be regarded by you, as no other then Tokens of your Fathers love, which he hath ſent to ſhew he is mindful of you, and hath now ſent to fetch you nearer to himſelf: What though it be a rough Meſſenger, as Jaylours uſe to be, yet the Meſſage may well make you entertain him with ſmiles. If it came to lead you forth to Execution indeed, you might well tremble; though not ſo much for its ſelf, as the errand it came on. Oh the ſtark madneſſe of thoſe blind and miſerable ones, that are afraid of a Plague, and not of Hell; that runaway from the Sickneſſe, and run on in Sin? But talk not you of loathſome Sores? Why Sirs, do they go any deeper than your fleſh? Let thoſe that have made their Carcaſſes their care, be troubled for this? Why what have you any thing more for your bodies to do? Any ſervice for which you ſhall need them? And need you care, how the old clothes are rent and torn, ſo long as you ſhall never wear, nor need them more? Part willingly with your rags, you have clothes a making, which ſhall ſoon ſilence your complaints. Swell, and break, and ſtink fleſh if thou wilt, I ſhall not be troubled with thee long? When thou proſpereſt moſt, then I was at the worſt; thou haſt been ſo much my enemy, that I cannot but rejoyce in thy ruines? If my tongue muſt needs complain, and my ſight, and ſmell be offended with my ſelf, all this ſhall not reach my heart? What care I for thy Sores and Pains, ſo long as my Souls in health: Go make haſt, and get thee to thy Grave, and there turn to Rottenneſs and Filth? I pity thee not, nor will ever ſympathize with thee more.

Nor yet complain of the Suddenneſſe of this Death. Leave this to them that would ſerve God, when they had nothing elſe to do, that put off all to a Lord have Mercie upon me; and a few good Prayers at their laſt gaſp. But what Death can be ſudden to you, who are not unprepared for Death; but have made it the buſineſſe of your lives, to fit your ſelves for it?

Nor let this be your trouble that your Friends forſake you, and are all afraid

afraid to come nigh you. Why what would you have them to do, they cannot rebuke your Diſeaſe, or delay your Death, or do any thing for you in the world you are going to; nor do you need they ſhoulp. Counſel I hope you have given them in time of Health, and therefore it may the leſs trouble you, that you cannot ſpeak to them now. To take a ſolemn leave of them, is a poor formality to trouble the thoughts of a dying man. Whatever help they could afford, you'l quickly be paſt all need of it, or them. Bear the want of their company or aſſiſtance a day or two, and you will never deſire, or want it more. Wherefore chear up your Spirits, and be not caſt down, but to the Rock of Ages betake your ſelves, who never fail'd you, nor any that placed their confidence in him; he's a preſent help in time of trouble; he'l come in to you when your doors are ſhut up; hee'l ſtand by your beds-ſide, when no other friend dare. Now Sirs, what's your God, your Saviour worth? A God to ſupport you, when the world fails you. A Saviour to receive you, when you leave the world. Now is not an holy life comfortable to your review? Do you now repent of the coſt and pains you have been at, or the ſufferings you have undergone for God? Was it not worth while to be laught and wondered at for your holy diligence, which laid in ſtore for ſuch a day as this, and brings you ſupport, when the hearts of others ſink for fear? Now Sirs, you are come to the end of your Pilgrimage; the long-long-lookt for day is come. Sin and Satan, the world and the fleſh, ſhall never trouble you more for ever. Now ſhall your Prayers at length be all heard, your Complainings ended, your Expectations and Longings ſatisfied, and accompliſhed. Chear up, chear up, brave Souls, but one ſtep more, and then you are at your Fathers houſe. Methinks I ſee the Arms of Chriſt ſtretcht out to receive you, and Angels waiting to conduct you to his Arms. Fear not, nor be diſmay'd, confidently reſign your Souls to him, who laid down his life for you. The darkneſſe laſts but a little while, and preſently you will come into the open light; oh the difference you will in a moment find, betwixt your dark and ſilent room, and the Manſion that ſhall be aſſigned you in your Fathers houſe! To which the ſtatelieſt Palace is a loathſome Dungeon. Oh what Acclamations and Hallelujahs, what crying, Holy, Holy, Holy! what Glorious Praiſes, and loud noiſes! What Crowns and Scepters, what Riches and Beauties, will your ears and eyes be preſently ſtricken with! So that you will be amazed, and wonder whether you are come, and where you have been all this while, that you never heard, nor ſaw theſe things before. So infinitely will they exceed your higheſt thoughts, when Faith helpt you to the cleareſt views. But all your ſtrangeneſs and amazement will ſoon

be

be over. Surprisals of joy will dissipate and succeeed them! This is the Glory, the hopes whereof upheld you all your days, and the glimmerings and fore-tasts did so oft revive you. Now you shall at length see the Lord who lov'd you, and gave himself for you, and whom your Souls have lov'd. Oh is there not life in his smiles! And if he smiles upon you, all the Angels and Saints will bid you welcome: For his beck and pleasure it is that rules all. There you shall be entred into that throng of blessed Spirits, yours shall their Employments be, their Priviledges shall be yours. Then shall your understandings be enlightned, your affections raised, and all your capacities widened, and all be fill'd with suitable truth and goodness; the latent powers of your souls, shall then be awakened into that high Celestial Life. Then shall you be nearer to your Saviour, than *John*, when he leaned on his Bosome; and shall taste the full fruits of his dear and costly love. Then, then blessed Soul thou shalt know, and see, and feel, and enjoy thy God, and be brought as near to him, as thou thy self canst desire, and receive as much from him, as thy nature is capable. The Lord thy Redeemer having by his Blood and Spirit, accomplished his whole design upon thee, and fitted thee for, will lead thee into the Fathers presence, and so thou shall enter upon the state of constant and full communion with him; And shalt be always spending an Eternity in Contemplating, and Admiring his Excellencies and Glories, and singing his Praises, in the warm breathings and out-goings of thy heart after him, and in the ravishments of highest mutual Love, and dearest Complacency, betwixt thy enlarged Soul, and infinite Essential goodness, even the God of Love. This thou shalt have, but what this is, though I had leasure and skill to say ten thousand times more than I have done, thou couldst not know the thousandth part, till thou dost enjoy it. Wherefore with an holy impatience, and eager joy, enter upon the possession of all the Treasures of Love, which Death comes to translate thee to. Bid it heartily welcome, open thy breast, and let it strike; 'Tis but the prick of a Pin, the smarts ceast assoon as it's in; the Pangs of it are gone in a trice. See they are over already, all pain was expired with that last groan, and now thou art entered upon thy joy. *Farwell blessed Souls, whom I hope shortly to follow, and with you to celebrate an everlasting Communion, in the Presence, Praise and Love of the Great Jehovah, and his Son Christ Jesus, to whom in the Unity of the Spirit, be rendred all Honour, Power and Glory, now and Eternally.* Amen.

FINIS.